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**REEL WARS: COLD WAR, CIVIL RIGHTS  
AND HOLLYWOOD'S CHANGING  
INTERPRETATION OF THE AMERICAN  
CIVIL WAR 1945-75**

**J. Roy Collins**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Greenwich  
for the degree of Master of Philosophy**

**March 2006**





## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my supervisors, Andrew Dawson, for his patient encouragement and for gently keeping me focused, and Michael Zell, for his very pertinent comments, also the library staff at Greenwich who have always been most helpful. My thanks, too, to my son Dan and my friends May Clarke and Jim Murray for struggling through a rather large first draft and Alan Rose for his help in obtaining many of the films on video. Also, my sister Tessa, for her proof reading, and Jacob Veale for his computer expertise. Finally, my partner Sarah for her continual encouragement and support and my daughters Hannah and Esther, who accepted that 'Dad was doing his thing.'

## ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of America's evolving sense of racial and national identity in the period from 1945 to the mid 1970s as refracted through Hollywood's representation of the American Civil War - a powerful event in American memory which still resonates today.

Civil War films have been the subject of study by film studies specialists and historians but they have concentrated on the early years highlighting the iconic films *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). The period 1945-75 has not received similar systematic attention, yet it is highly significant in American history covering as it does the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement.

The aim of the study is to show that history films can be used to assist in a better understanding of the past – not the 'past' that the history film purports to represent but the past of the moment of its production. This approach sees Hollywood films as untapped sources of evidence of changes in public perception about the issues of the day. This differs from the approach of most film historians who seek to examine the past by using archival and printed sources, such as newspapers, magazines and biography.

The study demonstrates the complex interaction of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement on Hollywood and how they influenced the discourse about race and national identity through popular culture. Ultimately it was the Civil Rights Movement that had the greater influence upon Civil War films. It also shows that Hollywood's presentation of the Civil War underwent a far more radical process of change than has hitherto been understood. By the late 1960s all of the early twentieth century myths had been questioned and overturned and African Americans had become part of mainstream America.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

AMPAS	Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences
AHR	American Historical Review
<i>Birth</i>	<i>The Birth of a Nation</i>
Commission (the)	United States Civil War Centennial Commission
CWSC	Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission
<i>GWTW</i>	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
OWI	Office of War Information
PCA	Production Code Administration
UCV	United Confederate Veterans
UDC	United Daughters of the Confederacy
USCV	United Sons of Confederate Veterans

## INTRODUCTION

Far more than the Revolution of 1776, the Civil War occupies the central place in American memory.<sup>1</sup> It is not just the four years of struggle, the huge loss of life, the emancipation of four million African Americans or the saving of the Union, but its influence on American society ever since. While slavery was abolished and the Union was saved, not all the issues were resolved to the participants' satisfaction. What became known as the 'unfinished business' of the Civil War saw the 'freed' African Americans 're-enslaved' throughout the South by a combination of judicial decision, state legislation and intimidation.<sup>2</sup> This racial subjugation was accepted by the North as an issue best left to those who had most experience in dealing with racial matters - the white South.<sup>3</sup> It fitted the developing racial concepts of white supremacy and helped to maintain the fiction that America's national identity was wholly white – a position sustained by immigration policies until the mid-1960s. Against this background, the struggle of African Americans to achieve their constitutional rights has now been recognised as forming a significant part of twentieth century American history. However, the issues of race and equality raised by the Civil War continue to be just as relevant today as they were in the 1860s and in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

The subject of this study is how popular culture, from 1945 to 1975, reflected and represented that struggle and those issues through the medium of Hollywood, using the genre of the Civil War film.<sup>5</sup> Popular culture is a product of its time and, as Peter Biskind says about movies, '(w)hatever their genre, they share a preoccupation with the pressing issues of the day.'<sup>6</sup> By analysing the Civil War films in this period, the debate over the issues of race and equality can be observed. At particular times the issues were discussed, at other times ignored; African Americans were sometimes marginalised, sometimes showcased; old stereotypes and myths re-emerged, new ones were created. These changes can be mapped against current events in society and demonstrate how Hollywood reflected and reacted to the fluctuations in attitudes towards race, equality and national identity, and can therefore provide historians, looking at the periods when the films were produced, with additional information.

Historians using film as a resource to understand the past is a comparatively recent trend. Before the 1970s historians tended to dismiss film as purely entertainment as, even when based on actual events, films inevitably include interpretations, distortions and invention to meet the expectations of the audience. Whilst there has been some recognition that history films can provide some understanding of the past, in terms of 'felt' history, or giving new perspectives, most historians still look at historical films from a purely evidential standpoint – how does the film relate to the facts – rather than whether they give an added dimension to understanding the past.

Ever since the Civil War ended, it has been used as a cultural symbol and vehicle, originating and reinforcing myths, inculcating American values and, by the middle of the twentieth century, as a critique of America and its foreign policy – especially in relation to Vietnam. Hollywood became interested in the Civil War in 1908 at a time when the white North and the white South had become reconciled, the African American marginalised and the Southern version of the Civil War predominated in popular culture and in academia. It helped transform a story of 'bitter sectional conflict into one of human courage and bravery,' assisting in 'reconciling the competing versions of what constitutes the United States...into a blame-free experience' to provide a narrative 'that would appeal to North and South alike.'<sup>7</sup> The Hollywood image portrayed a cultured Southern civilisation, a 'moonlight and magnolia' world, of large plantation houses, loyal servants, honourable, heroic men and beautiful, supportive women who were only defeated by superior forces.<sup>8</sup> Then followed the hardship of Reconstruction – the South ground down by northern carpetbaggers.<sup>9</sup> This was the myth that Hollywood took and built upon in film after film until D. W. Griffith, in his 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation (Birth)*, added the final myth that freed African Americans would revert to animalistic, sexual brutes if not controlled by kindly whites.<sup>10</sup> This representation of the Civil War remained unchanged for thirty years.

Myths are important in society. They interpret the past to give meaning and value to life and present an ideology to defend the status quo. The truth, says William H. McNeil, is what people believe. Myths can become reality and, in doing so, blind people to other evidence.<sup>11</sup> What 'actually happened', says David Goldfield, and 'what people thought happened belong to a single historical process, and history and memory are indelibly intertwined.....history is not learned – it is remembered, handed down.'<sup>12</sup> All the participants in the Civil War developed their separate myths and reinforced them through

rituals, monuments, oral reminiscences and history syllabi. David Blight has argued that three overall visions emerged from the Civil War: visions of reconciliation, white supremacy and emancipation. The first two gradually 'locked arms' to form, by the early 1900s, 'a segregated memory of the Civil War on racist terms.' But the emancipationist memory of the African Americans persisted, and its revival, through the Civil Rights Movement, helped to transform America.<sup>13</sup>

World War II became the catalyst, which changed Hollywood's approach to the Civil War film. The need to mobilise the whole nation brought African Americans into the industries of the North and West and into the armed services. Federal policies worked to reduce discrimination, building on the advances made under the New Deal.<sup>14</sup> African Americans gained self-confidence in fighting tyranny abroad and racism at home whilst academics demonstrated that race was a cultural, not a natural, concept and pointed to the inconsistencies of American democracy.<sup>15</sup> Before the war Hollywood's vision of the Civil War had been that of the static, pro-South, planter aristocracy where the question of white supremacy was barely challenged.<sup>16</sup> Afterwards, the plantation film virtually disappeared as the Civil War film moved west, the issues of race relations and equality were addressed – although not consistently - and the African American eventually emerged from the background.<sup>17</sup> This is a different view from that of Edward Campbell Jr., who comments that Hollywood's portrayal of the South remained consistent for seventy years, or that of Bruce Chadwick, who says that it was only in the late 1970s that there was a radical departure from the entrenched myths of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> However, by that time, radical change had already occurred.

Film and academic historians who have studied the Civil War in popular culture have concentrated on the years before 1940 highlighting the iconic films *Birth* and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Those who have looked at the Civil War films after 1945 have concentrated on the Civil War either as part of the 'western,' or as part of 'America at war', genres. More recently attention has been given to the television mini-series *Roots* (1977), Ken Burns' *Civil War* (1990) television documentary and by *Glory* (1989). There has been no systematic study of the intervening period, 1945-75.

Hollywood's representation of the Civil War after 1945 was animated by the complex interaction of the Cold War and civil rights. From the end of World War II the Cold War



dominated America's foreign policy and produced aggressive anti-communism at home. Hollywood, as did other institutions, was forced to conform to an anti-communist agenda. This influenced Civil War films more than other film genres, as the basis of these films is conflict between Americans and the denial of constitutional rights and equality to African Americans. Although America's race relations was an open goal in the world-wide ideological struggle with the Soviet Union, any good news was used to demonstrate the superiority of a democratic system in its ability to change without social upheaval.<sup>19</sup> Hollywood played its part by continuing to demonstrate how American values, unity and Christianity could prevail over the malign forces of atheistic communism.

The issue of civil rights came to prominence during World War II but was dropped from the domestic agenda before the onslaught of anti-communism. However, from the mid-1950s a new grass-roots Civil Rights Movement developed into a national campaign which put race relations into the centre of domestic politics. This study argues that it was the issue of civil rights and the Civil Rights Movement that ultimately became the dominant influence on Hollywood's production of Civil War films and in particular its approach to the centennial celebrations of 1961-65.

Over the thirty-year period of this study the range of Civil War films showed a society increasingly ill at ease and questioning its future direction. As America struggled to come to terms with righting the wrongs done to African Americans since slavery was abolished, it also had to face up to the consequences of neglecting black-white relationships. This proved both painful and revealing. It was painful, as southerners had to accept that African Americans had the same democratic rights as they had, and revealing, in that racism was shown to be just as widespread in the North as in the South.<sup>20</sup> The films also questioned America's national identity of whiteness and monitored the change to a more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. However, despite the divisions and polarisation of society that came to prominence in the 1960s, what remained consistent in these films was the belief in American values – a belief that was shared by both white and black Americans.



- <sup>1</sup> Bruce Catton, *America Goes to War* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1958), 12; Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 3; Hugh Tulloch, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1; Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, (eds.), *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Catton, *America Goes to War*, 12. Abraham Lincoln had called it ‘unfinished work’ in his Gettysburg Oration, 19 November 1863, Robert Birley, (ed.), *Speeches and Documents in American History, (Volume I) 1776-1815*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 285.
- <sup>3</sup> Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1993), 141.
- <sup>4</sup> The great issues of the Civil War are still alive – nationalism, democracy, liberty, equality, race, majority rule, minority rights, central authority and local self-government, use and abuse of power and the horrors of war. Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 5.
- <sup>5</sup> Although ‘Hollywood’ did not formally exist until after World War I, when all the major studios had transferred there, the term Hollywood is used throughout the text to refer to the American motion picture industry from its inception.
- <sup>6</sup> Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Trevor McCrisken and Andrew Pepper, *American History: The Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 64-5.
- <sup>8</sup> Said by Rhett Butler to Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind*.
- <sup>9</sup> This was the name given by Democrats to Republican politicians who came south, with all their possessions in a carpetbag, to win and to profit from government offices denied to ex-Confederates.
- <sup>10</sup> Whilst this image was not repeated on film – until the revival of the plantation film in the late 1960s and then in a totally different social context – it remained in the background as the unspoken and unshown fear that resurfaced in the 1950s in the mouths of southern segregationists.
- <sup>11</sup> William H. McNeil, *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3-22.
- <sup>12</sup> David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 2, 16.
- <sup>13</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3.
- <sup>14</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 168-9.
- <sup>15</sup> The writings of Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict and others demolished the intellectual arguments of racial superiority: Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 239. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dream: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1944).
- <sup>16</sup> Where it was, in films like *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *So Red the Rose* (1935), it was easily suppressed.
- <sup>17</sup> Where it does reappear, as in *Band of Angels* (1957), *Raintree County* (1957) and *Alvarez Kelly* (1966) it is used pejoratively as a background to the main narrative.
- <sup>18</sup> Edward D. C. Campbell, *The Celluloid South* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 4; Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Mary L. Dudziak explores this relationship in *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Throughout the text, the term 'southerners' refers to white southerners only.

## Chapter 1

### WHY USE HISTORY FILMS?

*'History, I am convinced, is not just something to be left to the historians.'*<sup>1</sup>

For much of the twentieth century historians dismissed history films as being no more than romantic historical novels served up as 'harmless entertainment' for a mass audience.<sup>2</sup> Filmmakers, however, invest considerable resources in the production of these films and often claim they are historically accurate because of the research carried out prior to production. In the 1970s, postmodernism began to question the historian's role and opened up the historical debate as to what constituted a representation of the past. In this context history films could be brought into the discussion, not on the basis of fact but on the basis of representation. At the same time younger historians were adopting methodologies from other disciplines and approaching history from a different perspective – history from 'below.' With the introduction of the videocassette, films became more accessible and the new technology was developed as a teaching aid.

There are currently three players involved in the debate on the use of history films in the representation of the past, although there is not an open dialogue between all three. Historians say that writing history depends upon an accumulation of evidence derived from primary sources. They argue that their training and professional discipline give them objectivity and therefore the ability to reject interpretations that cannot be validated by these sources or cross-referenced. However, whilst there has been some acknowledgement by historians of the place of film in representing the past, the problem of accuracy still looms large.<sup>3</sup> Filmmakers accept that history films may have to invent and manipulate the historical record to assist the narrative but, they argue, that what they can uniquely give is the 'feel' of history. Historians, sympathetic to filmmakers, contend that the use of invention and fabrication does not invalidate the use of history films as they give something more: they show things that written history is less able to do. By marrying truth and fiction these films can represent the past in a symbolic way. However, even sympathetic historians still find that filmmakers want to control the whole process and outcome, as the conversation between Eric Foner and John Sayles in *Past Imperfect* indicates.<sup>4</sup>

As it stands there seems to be no resolution. However, an entirely different perspective can be brought to the debate by regarding history films as historical documents in their own right, documents that contain information about the time in which the films were produced. As products of popular culture, films use the prevailing ideology, show changes in emphasis, and comment consciously and unconsciously on events and society's reaction to them. It is the past speaking to the present about the present. As Thomas Schatz says, 'Hollywood movies tend to reflect' America's 'own beliefs and pre-occupations.'<sup>5</sup>

### **Historians, filmmakers and history films up to the 1960s**

Until the debate on writing history began in the second half of the twentieth century, there are few examples of historians commenting on history films. Filmmakers, they felt, had little concern whether or not they bent, distorted or invented facts to create appealing stories.<sup>6</sup> Even the storm of protest aroused by D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*) in 1915 does not seem to have aroused them. The only comment by an historian is the one reportedly said by President Wilson that, "(i)t is like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true."<sup>7</sup> Wilson's comment, unknowingly, summed up the mood of popular consciousness: the protests were about representation – not about the facts. While later research would show that Griffith's facts, as well as his interpretation, were largely incorrect, his representation was 'in harmony with the historical wisdom of the day' and reflected the spirit of the age - white racial superiority.<sup>8</sup>

By 1915, historians from the north and the south had accepted the conclusions of James Ford Rhodes that though the South had been wrong to secede, the North had been far more reprehensible in forcing Reconstruction on the South.<sup>9</sup> Other historians were more interested in the development of America. Frederick Jackson Turner proposed that the frontier had produced a new kind of American with a new and unique type of democracy;<sup>10</sup> Charles Beard saw economic development as the crucial determinant of American history and saw the Civil War as 'essentially the struggle between two conflicting economies.' To Beard, slavery was merely an economic system.<sup>11</sup>

Historians would also have noted the Supreme Court's decision in the 'Mutual' case (1915)<sup>12</sup> - in the same year as *Birth* – that movie companies were considered 'a business

pure and simple' and were therefore not entitled to protection under the First Amendment. As such, they could not be regarded as 'part of the press of the country or organs of public opinion.'<sup>13</sup> With film classed as a 'business' providing entertainment, and subject to local censorship, any claim that it could be educational now disappeared. Historians, therefore, did not need to pay any attention to Hollywood's history films no matter how much they were claimed to be accurate. It was not until 1952, in the '*Miracle*' case, that the judgment was reversed.<sup>14</sup>

But Hollywood never abandoned the claim. It was an innovative way of looking at history. Griffith even proposed that film would replace written texts to teach history. 'In less than ten years,' he wrote in 1915, 'the children in the public schools will be taught practically everything from moving pictures. Certainly they will never be obliged to read history again....[they would just] press a button and actually see what happened. There will be no opinion expressed.....[they] will merely be present at the making of history.'<sup>15</sup>

Griffith saw film as a neutral, objective medium, which would present the facts of history. There would be no need for the historian to mediate. He saw an historical fact as the truth. What was written in the past had to be correct. He himself had carried out considerable research for *Birth*, had used veterans of the Civil War to advise him and had a 'memory' of that war through the anecdotal experiences told to him by his father.<sup>16</sup> Thirty years later he wrote that, '(i)n filming '*Birth*', I gave to my best knowledge the proven facts and presented the known truth about the Reconstruction period in the American South. These facts are based on an overwhelming compilation of authentic evidence and testimony.'<sup>17</sup> Yet the paradox was that half of the film that he considered to be the 'truth' was based on a novel, *The Clansman*, by Thomas Dixon - a Southern patriot and racist. The film industry did not take up his challenge to teach history this way although, in the 1920s, Yale University commissioned a series of historical films for teaching purposes.<sup>18</sup>

While filmmakers ignored Griffith's proposal, they never abandoned their efforts to make historical representation in history films as accurate and realistic as possible. This pressure came as much from the patrons of cinema as from the studios themselves. When audiences began pointing out incorrect details in films the studios responded by establishing research departments whose role was to make the films authentic and present an accurate image in every detail.<sup>19</sup> But they rarely, if ever, used historians.<sup>20</sup> Besides, they paid the researchers



and therefore had total control of their product. An outside expert could present a very different and possibly challenging situation – they could publicly contest the facts, which might be commercially damaging. However while care was taken to get the ‘environment’ right the ‘historicity and accuracy’ of the narrative were ‘attractive as long as they remained selling points.’<sup>21</sup> Getting the facts straight was just one aspect of the production process.<sup>22</sup> The industry’s own Production Code laid down what could, and could not, be shown.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore the development of genre – a set of conventions in style, subject matter and values – provided a recognisable formula that served the interests of producers and audience.<sup>24</sup> Besides, the success of the early Civil War films and *Birth* in particular, showed Hollywood how much the public liked its history films. But, to historians, the fact that film production was essentially a commercial enterprise could only confirm their view that history films had nothing to add to an understanding of the past.

However, there is one example of an historian suggesting to Hollywood that historians might have a beneficial role in the production of history films. In 1935 Louis Gottschalk wrote to the head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios suggesting that ‘if the cinema art is going to draw its subjects so generously from history, it owes it to its patrons and to its own high ideals to achieve a greater accuracy. No picture of a historical nature ought to be offered to the public until a reputable historian has had a chance to criticise and revise it.’<sup>25</sup> There was no reply and Hollywood continued to produce history films full of the ‘inaccuracies’ that Gottschalk had wanted to correct. Other historians appeared either not interested or remained silent. Robert Rosenstone has commented recently that it is impossible to make films ‘absolutely accurate, absolutely true’ to the past and, if so, they would be ‘dull both as film and history.’<sup>26</sup>

### **The challenge to traditional methodology**

From the 1960s, postmodernism opened up the debate on the interpretation of history by challenging the traditional model - the primacy of fact and the historian’s objectivity. Its critique, that truth is not absolute, timeless or eternal but relative to the needs of the author, if applied to written history, could lead to a fundamental reappraisal of the way the historian presented the past and of his role in the process.

Postmodernism was attractive to some historians who had begun to look at history films as

historical texts. Hayden White compared the processes of writing history with the processes of film production:

Every written history is a product of processes of condensation, displacement, symbolisation and qualification exactly like those used in the production of a filmed representation. It is only the medium that differs, not the way in which the messages are produced.<sup>27</sup>

Taking this approach, the history film had equal validity as a 'vision' of the past to that of a text written by an historian and therefore opened up the range of possible interpretations. Film historians, such as Robert Rosenstone and Robert Toplin, who support this view, consider that the role of the history film is not to attempt to present an exact image of what had happened but to give a sufficient representation of the events. The history film, they say, can give the 'look' and 'feel' of history, which would resonate with the audience and have meaning for the present day.<sup>28</sup>

However this left postmodernists open to the charge that they had no standards to judge what did or did not happen or the quality of one text against another. And if everything in the past is a recreation by the present it cuts us off from a past that not only tells us who we are, but gives meaning and support to our daily lives. Whilst some postmodernists like Rosenstone continue to champion experimental films,<sup>29</sup> others, like Toplin, distinguish between 'true' and 'false' invention. They separate those films that give a sufficiently symbolic representation of the past, which, they feel, can override the scruples of those historians who condemn films if any detail does not exactly fit the historical record - the 'accuracy police'<sup>30</sup> - from those that are so totally against the historical record as to take the film 'out of history.'<sup>31</sup>

As postmodernism challenged the writing of history from the outside, younger 'New Left' historians challenged history's traditional methodology from within.<sup>32</sup> These historians came from a more left-wing background and began to look at history from the point of view of ordinary people than that of the power elites. In this respect they were more in tune with Hollywood, which provided entertainment for the masses and produced films that reflected everyday experiences. They were also more open to a multi-disciplinary approach, which embraced methodologies from the social sciences and were encouraged by the developing areas of feminism, semiotics and black studies.<sup>33</sup> As a generation brought up with film as an integral part of popular culture they were more aware of the

potential of film as a commentary on society. With postmodernism gaining respect some historians saw it as providing intellectual support for the use of history films in giving valid representations of the past. Nevertheless, as the debate over history films developed, many of these younger historians were forced by the post-structuralist attack on objectivity to defend their profession in the 1980s.<sup>34</sup> As Eric Foner comments, a word is worth a thousand pictures - there is more information in a book than in a film.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps a more important influence on historians in changing attitudes towards film was the emergence of cheap and accessible video recording and playback technology in the 1980s. Before then historians had not needed to consider images as more than an adjunct, examples to enliven the written text. History was the written past and they were the gatekeepers. Pierre Sorlin suggests that apart from film being an expensive form of research and having to work in a different medium entirely - images rather than words - historians had really dismissed history films as they reduced their monopoly over source material.<sup>36</sup> This may have been one reason for their years of silence about the potential of history films. The videocassette brought another dimension into teaching with the development of specific teaching material, while commercial films became easily affordable and accessible.<sup>37</sup> With the new technology a film was now more like a book being able to be stopped, played back or held in a still image. With the ubiquity of television and the availability of small hand-held cameras a wide range of events – including those that might not be recorded in written form – were being captured on film by ‘ordinary’ people: history was increasingly becoming a visual record and more democratic. Historians had to move with the times. If they were going to use images from contemporary society why not use those from the filmmakers as well.

Many historians began to use the visual medium routinely in the classroom. Others became involved in the process of making films as advisers to film projects or as ‘talking heads’ in documentaries – as for example in Ken Burns’s *Civil War* (1990). From the 1990s, sessions on history films at conferences and reviews of history films in academic journals have become routine.<sup>38</sup> Cultural historians have begun talking about a post-literate age as the use of film in the classroom edged a little closer to Griffith’s vision of 1915.



## Historians, history films and filmmakers at the end of the twentieth century

By the late 1970s film studies in America had become a significant part of higher education and has continued to expand as an area of academic interest.<sup>39</sup> In a key word search on the internet using the words 'Hollywood', 'history' and 'film,' 83% of catalogue entries at the University of California, Los Angeles, are dated 1980 and later. A similar search at two United Kingdom university libraries - Greenwich and University College, London - obtained comparable results of 87% and 96% respectively. These have been increasing each year.<sup>40</sup>

Although a number of significant academic studies began to appear in the 1970s,<sup>41</sup> film studies was 'convulsed by debates on theoretical issues' – on methodologies and interpretations – until the mid-1980s and this delayed the debate on the value and place of history films.<sup>42</sup> Formal recognition was given, however, when the *American Historical Review* (AHR) used its December 1988 edition as a forum to debate the issues. Since then the AHR and the *Journal of American History* have included regular sections on history films while the American Historical Association and the Organisation of American Historians have instituted an award for the best history film of the year. There are now regular conferences sponsored by academic organisations devoted to film and history while a positive interest by historians was demonstrated by the publication of *Past Imperfect* in 1995.<sup>43</sup>

*Past Imperfect* gave sixty-one prominent historians, journalists and other academics an opportunity to choose and review nearly one hundred historical films that touched on their area of expertise. The editorial by Mark Carnes was encouraging. Hollywood history, he said, 'filled irritating gaps.... polished dulling ambiguities' and 'sparkled in its lack of moral ambiguity and tedious complexity.' Movies inspired and entertained and often taught important truths about the human condition. Some films had even become historical documents saying more about the era in which they were made than about the historical representation. Movies, he concluded, had a unique capacity for stimulating a dialogue about the past and *Past Imperfect* was a reply to that dialogue.<sup>44</sup> Historians were at last taking Hollywood seriously.

A feature of the book is a debate between the historian Eric Foner and the filmmaker John Sayles on their different approaches to history. This debate could have been a meeting of minds as Foner is a left-wing historian and Sayles is interested in social issues.<sup>45</sup> Foner, who has been a consultant on historical docudramas, expressed his continuing reservations about the way filmmakers use history. He related how he was asked to write a statement on the film *Glory* (1989) which could be used to publicise the film. However, the studio rejected his conclusion that 'it was accurate in a general way but there were too many historical inaccuracies.' Foner then expressed his concerns about the way 'truth' is altered in film for dramatic purpose - especially when so many people learn history from the movies. He concluded that there had to be a legitimate interpretation of the evidence using standards of historical truth and presentation. John Sayles researches his films but does not use historians, as that would mean taking their point of view. What is important for him is to be true to the spirit of the story. Filmmakers need to mediate and interpret the data using invention and simplification to make it an acceptable product for the audience. The movie industry has no responsibility to get the story right - it is about entertainment and profit. However history films gain legitimacy if audiences know that they are based on something that really happened.<sup>46</sup>

Foner's reservations supported Carne's assertion that Hollywood films are no 'substitute for history' and can be misleading, as Hollywood's claim to make historically 'accurate' and 'truthful' films is accepted by many whose 'only history' is what they see in those films. Most of the contributors echoed this and picked over each film to expose the differences between 'historical fact and celluloid fiction.'<sup>47</sup> Some reviewers did make reference to the present day and James McPherson's review of *Glory* demonstrated that historical film could teach history. It was unfortunate, however, that the title of the book implied that, while Hollywood could only make imperfect representations of history, historians could get to the truth of a perfect and knowable past. The films also appeared in historically chronological order. Had they appeared in order of their date of production an assessment could have been made as to how, and if, Hollywood history films had changed their approach in representing the past. Historians can point out the limitations of film, yet to continue to oppose 'fact' and 'fiction,' as demonstrated in *Past Imperfect*, fails significantly to advance the debate about the appropriate place of history films in the discipline.

How have sympathetic film historians responded? Some like John O'Connor have suggested that specific analysis of history films should be driven by the nature of historical inquiry and suggests that filmmakers should make history films, which allow for alternative explanations and complex motivations.<sup>48</sup> Natalie Davis sees history film as a valuable and innovative historical vision as long as the differences between film and the professional historian is acknowledged. Film, she says, must be 'honest' in its representation – both in content and in technique.<sup>49</sup> Rosenstone, while supporting the experimental film, cannot see Hollywood making anything other than mainstream films – where history is shown as a 'linear story' with a 'moral message' and there is hope in the future.<sup>50</sup> Toplin attempted to find a middle ground between those who see history film as manipulating and fabricating the past and those who see these films as 'metaphorical statements, experiments in artistic imagination.' His own experience in participating in the production of films led him to propose that historians could profit from an understanding of the whole process of filmmaking and perhaps participate in it. He found that despite trying to portray the past responsibly – 'rendering the truth about the past' – there were too many holes in the historical record and therefore he was forced to invent.<sup>51</sup> Even Rosenstone, who takes the most postmodernist view, agrees that the filmmakers use of invention must be 'apposite.'<sup>52</sup> To be taken seriously, he says, the history film must not violate the overall data and meanings of what we already know of the past.<sup>53</sup>

The debate is not resolvable. In 1998 Robert Rosenstone saw that progress in terms of how the *AHR* approached history was still limited by the 'Dragnet' approach – 'the facts, just the facts.'<sup>54</sup> If filmmakers were given the opportunity to present history 'chaos is bound to result' as there is no means of knowing 'the truth of what is on the screen.'<sup>55</sup> Sumiko Higashi pointed out that in 1997 the editor of the *AHR* stated that the journal would only accept film reviews from academics who are historians and not from those academics whose main scholarship was in film studies.<sup>56</sup> This indicates a continuing degree of exclusiveness by historians as to the relative worth of different academic disciplines, a reluctance to accept an interdisciplinary approach to the past and a defence of the historian's traditional position as sole guardian and gatekeeper to the past.

Mark Carnes says that history films 'are entertaining, they stimulate thought, and they may draw people into further consideration of the subject.'<sup>57</sup> That is certainly an advance but the book he edited pointed to a more traditional view. History films certainly need to

overcome the more extreme examples of invention and should be sufficiently robust in their interpretation – symbolically true – to withstand the criticism of not being scrupulously true to historical fact. However, while this debate continues few historians have looked at history films as representing the history of its time of production. This approach can give additional insight into the social, political and cultural history of America.

### **History films are about the present**

Concentrating on ‘facts,’ showing how history films distort history, is not necessarily the best or only way to understand history films.<sup>58</sup> Much of the early debate, around the place of history films adding to the understanding of the past, has centred on convincing historians that the filmmakers use of invention, compression and the other techniques of genre do not always invalidate their representation of the past. Film historians therefore concentrated on establishing that history films are legitimate texts in their own right and that they aided that understanding by offering different insights to those of historians. Toplin adds to the argument by distinguishing between those history films where ‘distortions serve the purpose of communicating broader truths’ and those of gross ‘fictional excess and over-simplification.’<sup>59</sup>

An alternative approach begins by accepting that history films are primarily about the present.<sup>60</sup> Filmmakers, says Leger Grindon, have followed a long tradition of grappling with the present by writing about the past.<sup>61</sup> Rosenstone calls this the ‘explicit approach,’ which can be applied to any film, and argues that it does not talk about the historical issues. That is correct to an extent, but some historical issues continue into the present and are reassessed by historians in the present. However to get round the accuracy debate Rosenstone supports an ‘experimental approach’ where film challenges by its construction and narrative ‘what we mean by the word *history*.’<sup>62</sup> This may stimulate, as postmodernists claim, a ‘different way of thinking about the past’ and help to ‘re-vision’ history, but it cannot address the basic criticism of even sympathetic historians such as Eric Foner.<sup>63</sup>

Films are important sources of information about society as films ‘speak either implicitly or explicitly to the concerns and preoccupations of their moment of production.’<sup>64</sup>



Therefore historians can, with over a century of film available, use them to chronicle changes in society's attitude to particular issues or to past events over time. This approach is more sensitive in picking up cultural change rather than taking a single film or a group of films on unrelated subjects over a short period. An example of this can be seen in how Hollywood represented African Americans in the films *Birth*, *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Glory*.

History films also provide a safe environment to examine the issues of the day since putting on period costumes shields the audience from confronting issues directly.<sup>65</sup> The film *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) set in the 1920s was, according to David Newman one of its creators, 'about what is going on now.' The two 'anti-establishment, rebellious and independent' young criminals were challenging authority and the social conditions and developing an alternative life-style similar to the students, civil rights activists and those seeking a counter-culture in the late 1960s.<sup>66</sup> The same can be said of Civil War films, which presented an image of the America of the present by exploring the process of reconciliation, the formation of national identity and race relations in the nineteenth century. Who were included as Americans, and who were not, at what time the process of inclusion began, or was stopped and restarted, can be identified and related to what was happening in society at the time of production.

Hollywood has a significant role as a mediator and presenter of cultural values. It is not just a reflector of themes and issues but an active participant in the political arena. It does it by stealth, 'creating an illusion that what happens on the screen is a neutral recording of objective events' rather than promoting a particular ideology.<sup>67</sup> Traditional Hollywood supported the status quo and steered clear of any ideology that challenged the existing order unless it seemed that its own best interest were served by producing a more liberal film.<sup>68</sup> The way Hollywood responded to the political and social pressures, and to its own financial crises during this period, confirms the influence of the present in Hollywood films.

Some film historians have taken this approach, particularly with westerns, which have become synonymous with America's political, cultural and psychological development.<sup>69</sup> Michael Coyne, in *The Crowded Prairie* (1997), looks at how the Hollywood western has been a 'potent means of articulating and promoting' the development of national identity.<sup>70</sup>

He uses selected films to illustrate how the western 'remained popular by being thematically and stylistically responsive to the nation's ever-changing culture' setting the films against the context of their production.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Civil War films can be used to assist our understanding of America as they have an almost continuous production history and deal with issues that continue to be debated.

This thesis concentrates on Hollywood's representation of the Civil War in the middle of the twentieth century, not about Hollywood producing period features, which are set in the middle of the nineteenth century. Film historians of the post-World War II period emphasise the Cold War as the most important factor in determining the relationship between Hollywood and society. But accenting just the Cold War is an inadequate model to explain how Hollywood altered its representation of the Civil War as the focus is generally on the 1945-55 decade, just as the Civil Rights Movement begins to have a significant impact. Those who look in some depth at Civil War films, see the films in a broader social context in their analysis but still miss significant connections.<sup>72</sup> Even African American film historians barely mention the Civil Rights Movement, as they are more concerned with representation and image than context.<sup>73</sup> There also appears to be no discussion on why Hollywood's attitude to the centennial celebrations of the Civil War was so different to that of the semi-centennial; or why Hollywood changed its attitude towards African American representation in Civil War movies; or why Civil War films were popular at some times and not at others.

### **What is a Civil War film?**

There is one outstanding methodological issue that remains and that is the definition of what constitutes a Civil War film. Over the years Hollywood's focus on the Civil War has changed from films that were almost exclusively set during the Civil War period to those that were located only partly in the Civil War or mainly, if not exclusively, after the Civil War. This may be why some film historians do not give a definition while others talk about 'the Civil War era,' which encompasses the Ante Bellum and the Reconstruction periods.<sup>74</sup> It was essential therefore to establish criteria as to which films should be included and which should be excluded.

The outstanding and unresolved issues of the Civil War were race, civil rights and national

identity and these were taken as the key criteria if the narrative was not directly set during the war. To be included, therefore, a film had to take place wholly or partly during the Civil War; or either before or after the Civil War period but having a direct relationship to the war through the characters, issues and narrative; or addressed issues that were directly related to the Civil War and its outcome - even if it was at some distance in time. A film was excluded if it was set at the same time but did not address the issues, was not made by Hollywood, e.g. British films and 'spaghetti westerns,' or was a 'made-for-television' film. (See Appendices 5-7 for Civil War Film Exhibition from 1908.)

Film historians have tended to concentrate on the few well-known Civil War films but it is the presentation of the issues in the many less well-known films that is just as, possibly more, significant. In his preface to *Movie-Made America* Robert Sklar said that he had 'to go beyond the handful of major directors and the few dozen classic films' to understand the role of motion pictures in the twentieth century.<sup>75</sup> In the same way it is essential to look at the whole range of Civil War films, many, of which, may have been popular at the time, in order to examine changes in popular consciousness.

- <sup>1</sup> Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 5.
- <sup>2</sup> Richard Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1983).
- <sup>3</sup> For example see the comments of the contributors in Mark Carnes, (ed.), *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1995).
- <sup>4</sup> 'A Conversation Between Eric Foner and John Sayles' in Carnes, (ed.), *Past Imperfect*, 11-28.
- <sup>5</sup> Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 58.
- <sup>6</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 200.
- <sup>7</sup> Raymond A. Cook, *Thomas Dixon* (New York: Twayne, 1974), 115.
- <sup>8</sup> Peter C. Rollins, *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 2.
- <sup>9</sup> James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*, 8 Volumes (New York: MacMillan, 1892-1906).
- <sup>10</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', paper given to the American Historical Association in 1893.
- <sup>11</sup> Thomas J. Pressly, *Americans Interpret their Civil War* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 238-39.
- <sup>12</sup> The Mutual Film Corporation had filed a case against the states of Ohio and Kansas for permitting their films to be censored. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994, first published 1975), 127.
- <sup>13</sup> Thomas Cripps, *Hollywood's High Noon: Moviemaking and Society Before Television* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 74; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 127-28.
- <sup>14</sup> *Burstyn v. Wilson*, 1952.
- <sup>15</sup> Article in *The Editor*, 1915, quoted in Robert Lang, (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation: D.W. Griffith, Director* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Griffith used and quoted from Woodrow Wilson's *A History of the American People*, Vol. 5, *Reunion and Nationalisation* (New York, 1901), 49-60 as quoted in Michael Rogin, 'The Sword Becomes a Flashing Vision,' in Lang (ed.) *The Birth of a Nation*, 253.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter to *Sight and Sound*, 1947, quoted in Lang, (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation*, 3.
- <sup>18</sup> Yale University in association with Pathe produced a series of films in the early 1920s under the title *Authorised History: Chronicles of America* based on books in the Yale library. Only events up to the Civil War were to be filmed as it was felt that later events were too close and therefore too delicate to be considered. Roberta Pearson 'A White Man's Country,' seminar at University College London, 9 November, 2000.
- <sup>19</sup> George F. Custen, 'Making History' in Marcia Landy, (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 70.
- <sup>20</sup> Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films* (New York, 1964) quoted in Thomas Cripps, 'Film: The Historians' Dangerous Friend,' *Film and History*, 5 (1975), 6.



- <sup>21</sup> George F. Custen, 'Hollywood and the Research Department,' in Alan Rosenthal, (ed.), *Why Docudrama?* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: South Illinois University Press, 1999), 134 – 146.
- <sup>22</sup> Custen, 'Hollywood and the Research Department,' 137-38. However basic factual errors crept in which went against Hollywood's insistence on the validity of their research. For example in *Five Guns West* (1955) one of the men released from prison to carry out the mission had been put there in 1867, whilst the co-producer of *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) said that it was 'to be released on the next 4<sup>th</sup> July (1959) during the centennial.' *Citizen News*, 26 November, 1958.
- <sup>23</sup> The Motion Picture Production Code was adopted by the Association of Motion Picture Producers in February 1930, and by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in March 1930. It came fully into effect in 1934 and was amended several times until it was replaced by a rating system in 1968. The code established in general and in particular terms what could and what could not be shown, uttered or be the subject of a picture.
- <sup>24</sup> Louis Gianneth, *Understanding Movies, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 362; Phillip L. Gianos, *Politics and Politicians in American Film* (London: Praeger, 1999), 4-7.
- <sup>25</sup> Letter to Samuel Marx, 18 April, 1935, Gottschalk Papers, 1: 6, quoted in Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream, The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, Published 1988), 194.
- <sup>26</sup> Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 77.
- <sup>27</sup> Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty,' *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), 1193-99.
- <sup>28</sup> Toplin, *Reel History*, 47-50, 59; Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 59,78.
- <sup>29</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Reconstruction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- <sup>30</sup> Term used on H-FILM in 1998 in a discussion on judging history films.
- <sup>31</sup> Toplin discusses 'good' film history – as in *Shadowlands* (1993), *Glory* (1989) and *Titanic* (1997) – as compared to 'bad' film history – as in *Amistad* (1997), *Mississippi Burning* (1998) and *The Hurricane* (1999) - in *Reel History*, 58-89.
- <sup>32</sup> This was a loose term for a group 'united by their "conviction of America's depravity."' Only some were connected to the New Left students' movement. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 417-8.
- <sup>33</sup> Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 23.
- <sup>34</sup> David Harlan, *The Degradation of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 74.
- <sup>35</sup> Carnes, (ed.), *Past Imperfect*, 12.
- <sup>36</sup> Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 4-5.
- <sup>37</sup> The film industry saw the potential in this new market and began to make new films available on video – and now on DVD - but has been recording older films, including the silent movies, onto video and DVD using new techniques to remaster the existing copies.
- <sup>38</sup> Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 47.
- <sup>39</sup> By 1977 over one thousand colleges were offering film-related courses. Melvyn Stokes, 'The Rise of Film History' in Melvyn Stokes, (ed.), *The State of U.S. History* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 269.
- <sup>40</sup> Survey carried out in May 2004 on the internet.

- <sup>41</sup> For example Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Film, New Third Edition* (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1994, first published 1973); Sklar, *Movie-made America*; Daniel J. Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976); Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- <sup>42</sup> Stokes, 'The Rise of Film History,' 271-2.
- <sup>43</sup> Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past, 2. Past Imperfect* was published for the Society of American Historians.
- <sup>44</sup> Carnes, (ed.), *Past Imperfect*, 9-10.
- <sup>45</sup> John Sayles makes films like *Matewan* (1987) – about a mining strike in the 1920s in West Virginia. He has his own production company and raises the finances he needs for each film.
- <sup>46</sup> 'A Conversation Between Eric Foner and John Sayles' in Carnes, (ed.), *Past Imperfect*, 11-28.
- <sup>47</sup> Richard Howells, review of *Past Imperfect* in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 28 June, 1996.
- <sup>48</sup> John E. O'Connor, 'History in Images/ Images in History: Reflections on the Importance of Film and Television Study for an Understanding of the Past,' *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), 1200-9.
- <sup>49</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 9-10.
- <sup>50</sup> Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 55-6, 77-8.
- <sup>51</sup> Toplin, *Reel History*, 158, 200.
- <sup>52</sup> Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 79.
- <sup>53</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, 'The Historical film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age' in Marcia Landy, (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 66.
- <sup>54</sup> This quotation is from the 1950s television police series *Dragnet* (1951-59) and said by Sergeant Joe Friday when he investigates a crime. Robert A. Rosenstone, 16 April 1999, 'Reflections on Reflections on history in images/history in words', *Screening the Past*. Available from: <http://latrobe.edu.au/screeningthe/past/firstrelease/fr0499/rrfr6c.htm> (accessed 10 July, 2003).
- <sup>55</sup> Rosenstone, *Reflections*.
- <sup>56</sup> Sumiko Higashi, 'Rethinking Film as American History,' *Rethinking History*, 2 (1998), 87-101.
- <sup>57</sup> Tim Cornwell, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 26 January, 1996, 16-17.
- <sup>58</sup> Michael R. Pitts, *Hollywood and American History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1984).
- <sup>59</sup> Toplin, *Reel History*, 203.
- <sup>60</sup> Sorlin, *The Film in History*, ix; Peter C. Rollins, (ed.), *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1983), 1-2; Robert A. Rosenstone, 'History in Images/ History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film,' *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), 1173-85; David Herlihy, 'Am I a Camera? Other Reflections on Film and History,' *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), 1186-92.
- <sup>61</sup> Leger Grindon, *Shadows on the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 1.
- <sup>62</sup> Rosenstone: 'Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age,' 51-4.

<sup>63</sup> Rosenstone, 'The Historical Film,' 58; 'A Conversation Between Eric Foner and John Sayles,' in Carnes, (ed.), *Past Imperfect*, 11-28.

<sup>64</sup> Trevor McCrisken and Andrew Pepper, *American History: The Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Stanley Kubrick comments that setting a film in the past 'removes the environmental blinkers....and gives....a deeper and more objective perspective.' Quoted in Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 24.

<sup>66</sup> Toplin, *Reel History*, 42.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), quoted in McCrisken and Pepper, *American History*, 8.

<sup>68</sup> Ernest Giglio, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 10 - 11.

<sup>69</sup> Philip French, *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); Jeanine Basinger, *American Cinema: One Hundred Years of Filmmaking* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991); Jenni Calder, *There Must be a Lone Ranger Somewhere: The Myth and Reality of the Wild West* (London: Sphere Books, 1976); John H. Lenihan, *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in Western Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Philip R. Loy, *Westerns and American Culture, 1930-1955* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2001).

<sup>70</sup> Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), ix.

<sup>71</sup> Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, 86.

<sup>72</sup> For example: Coyne, in *The Crowded Prairie*, notes contemporary social problems and gives some context; Lenihan, *Showdown* includes the Cold War and race but not the Civil Rights Movement; David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) looks at the 'Vietnam' western; E. D. C. Campbell, *The Celluloid South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981) gives context and includes the Civil Rights Movement but does not examine its impact above the general political outline; J.T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978) identifies the change in America's representation of the South but includes very few Civil War films after 1945 and more historical than political and social context; David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002) briefly outlines the Civil Rights Movement milestones and white reaction in the 1950/1960s.

<sup>73</sup> Where race is the main concern the accent is on stereotyping and the influence of individual actors as in Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) although he does use the current political background; Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*; Vincent F. Rocchio, *Reel Racism: Confronting Hollywood's Construction of African-American Culture* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 2000).

<sup>74</sup> Some authors, like Chadwick in *The Reel Civil War* (2001), include the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* films or films about the early life of Lincoln. Kenneth Cameron, in *America on Film* (1997), excludes all films that do not have a real person and some version of a real and specific event. On this basis he only includes three Civil War films from the 1950s, one of which, about John Brown, ends in 1859. Yet he omits two other films that meet his criteria - *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958) and *The Horse Soldiers* (1959).

<sup>75</sup> Sklar, *Movie-made America*, ix.

## Chapter 2

### A WAR REMEMBERED, A WAR REUSED

*The past is never dead. It's not even past.*<sup>1</sup>

Hollywood did not suddenly discover the Civil War - it was already firmly established in American culture and memory. It 'still exists,' says David Goldfield, 'an event without temporal boundaries, an interminable struggle that has generated perhaps as many casualties since its alleged end in 1865 as during the four preceding years.'<sup>2</sup> Its deeds and legacy have burned into popular consciousness, spawning great myths and inspiring a range of popular culture from memoirs to plays, re-enactments to memorabilia, monuments to novels, genealogy to poetry, painting and music. Hollywood took up the Civil War in its earliest days and more films have been made about it than on any other historical event.

#### **The continuing influence of the Civil War**

Of the three significant and formative events in the history of the United States – the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers (1620), the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary war (1776-83) and the Civil War (1861-65) - it is the latter that still looms across the American landscape. Thomas Pressly suggested an answer when he wrote that the Civil War 'seemed to involve questions which go to the very heart of national life: the relationship between the national government and the states....the question of 'majority rule' in a constitutional democracy....the role of the Negro in American life: the question of what economic policies the national government should adopt.'<sup>3</sup> These are great issues, but civil wars have another side, they evoke great emotions and great loyalties, especially in the defeated side, which echo down the generations.

It is not only white Americans who look back to the Civil War and the issues that it raised – of equality, national identity and race. African Americans also look to it to regain and reaffirm their place in American history. In September 1996 African American re-enactors marched along the same victory parade route in Washington D. C. as only white soldiers of the Grand Army of the Republic had done in May 1865. Two years later the Spirit of Freedom, designed by an African-American sculptor, was unveiled in the centre of a Wall



of Honor dedicated to, and listing, all the members of the United States Colored Troops - including their white officers.<sup>4</sup>

Emotion inevitably produces distortion and the South, desperate to come to terms with the consequences of a devastating defeat, occupation and emancipation, produced the myth of the Lost Cause. The South, so the myth established, had fought to preserve states' rights, not to preserve slavery; it had fought for what it believed to be right; its soldiers had fought bravely and honourably and were only finally overwhelmed by vastly superior forces; the North had provoked, and then invaded, the South and destroyed its superior civilisation; the slaves, with their limited abilities, had been generally happy and contented, well looked after and received moral education and care in the most favourable paternalistic environment; and Reconstruction was a courageous battle against the despoilers of Southern values – the Yankees and the African Americans.<sup>5</sup> Around this myth the South came together – it had not been united before, not even during the war – and in 1877, after regaining political power in the eleven secession states, the white political aristocracy was left to nurture its traditions, establish new rites and to take charge of the memory of the Civil War - or the 'War Between the States' as the South renamed it in 1898.<sup>6</sup>

By 1900 the memory of the Civil War for most white Americans had coalesced into one of reconciliation and white supremacy. North and South had gradually come together as veterans from both sides found common ground in reflecting on their experiences of a bloody war of American against American. This reconciliation between the white North and the white South was symbolised in the Spanish-American War of 1898, as the South enthusiastically embraced the chance to demonstrate its prowess in war and loyalty to the nation, and was cemented at the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913. The emancipationist vision held by the African Americans was pushed into the background of white consciousness. But it stayed with the former slaves in their memories and memorials, to re-emerge with great force in the mid-twentieth century, to transform America.<sup>7</sup>

It is the handing down of these memories that places the Civil War in the forefront of American history. Memories are not only handed down formally through educational institutions but informally as part of family history and community myths and tradition. In the South, says David Goldfield, history is not learned, it is handed down and what was

handed down was both gloriously heroic and burningly painful. It is always the painful memories of suffering and loss that are carried deep in the psyche.<sup>8</sup> D. W. Griffith is not alone in accepting the centrality of family memory in revisiting the past. Roy Rozenzweig and David Thelen asked a sample of people about the role of the past in their lives. Most people said that the past was both familial and concrete and cited stories told by family members and instanced photographs that triggered memories. When they were asked who was most trusted in speaking about the past, the answer given was grandparents, relatives and eyewitnesses.<sup>9</sup> With the oral tradition so strong as a mediator of the past it is little wonder that the white South was able to maintain its myths of defeat and of a past glorious age which it buttressed by the formal and informal institutions it developed. The last Civil War veteran only died in 1959, while the centennial stimulated ordinary Americans to research their family's involvement in the war.<sup>10</sup> Today there are numerous internet sites, battle re-enactments and heritage centres to reaffirm and relive the past.<sup>11</sup>

The Civil War occupies a unique place in American history. It was the last war fought on American soil. It was characterised by a series of bloody battles that left over 620,000 dead – more than all the casualties of all other wars fought by American soldiers put together – and many thousands more wounded.<sup>12</sup> There was scarcely a family in the North or South that did not mourn dead soldiers or harbour disabled veterans.<sup>13</sup> The major battles and events – such as Pickett's charge at Gettysburg – are burned into American myth and history. Both sides, according to the myth, fought with great honour and bravery for causes they both deemed to be right. To Bruce Catton, in 1958, this was patriotism at the highest level: ordinary Americans teaching future Americans what patriotism is all about. The Civil War became a place from which to measure the dimensions of almost everything that happened in the United States since that time.<sup>14</sup> Robert Penn Warren declared that,

(t)he Civil War is, for the American imagination, the greatest single event in our history. Without too much wrenching, it may, in fact, be said, to *be* American history.' It was only with the Civil War that the 'more perfect union' .....became a reality, and we became a nation..... The Civil War became our only 'felt history.....It is an overwhelming and vital image of human, and national, experience.<sup>15</sup>

Thirty years later Shelby Foote concurred when he commented that

any understanding of this nation has to be based....on an understanding of the Civil

War.....[it] defined us as to what we are, and it opened us to what we became, good and bad.....this enormous catastrophe.....was the crossroads of our being.<sup>16</sup>

Alan Noble, observing how the Civil War tends to be defined in clichés, comments that ‘(t)hese images, each laden with emotion, are in our bones.’<sup>17</sup> With these views, the Civil War takes on a quasi-mystical experience. Out of the ashes of the conflict a new nation was born. The Civil War therefore becomes the myth of rebirth - ironically echoed in *Birth* with its overt racism – giving the nation the opportunity to return to its ideals.<sup>18</sup>

One of the major results of the war was to remake the United States into a truly ‘united’ nation. Instead of using the plural phrase ‘the United States are,’ it could now be said that ‘the United States is.’<sup>19</sup> While states’ rights remained embedded in the Constitution, and would continue to be raised in the future in the dynamic tension of local versus national powers and responsibilities, it would no longer be associated with secession.<sup>20</sup> Lincoln had saved the Union and the Union was to become the nation. During the war Lincoln increasingly referred to the ‘nation’, rather than just the ‘Union’, and to the future of that nation as one of democratic and representative government.<sup>21</sup> However his assassination led to a different path than the one he had mapped out ‘with malice towards none and with charity to all’ to bring the country back together again.<sup>22</sup>

The second major result of the war was that it settled the question of slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments (1865-69) abolished slavery, defined and guaranteed citizenship and the right to vote to all citizens. However, apart from the short-lived Freedmen’s Bureau, the African Americans were left in an increasingly racist environment.<sup>23</sup> They were gradually isolated and segregated from whites through the Jim Crow<sup>24</sup> laws enacted by the southern states, which were given constitutional legitimacy by the Supreme Court in 1896.<sup>25</sup> With the vast majority of the former slaves remaining in the South, Northerners could slip away from the ‘problem’ of making equality a reality. The North had kept its word: freedom and citizenship had been given to the slaves. If there were any problems arising from that then it was a matter for the Southern states. Yet the unfinished business of the Civil War – ‘the problem of the colour line’ - refused to go away.<sup>26</sup> Race and the Civil War were inseparable and by the mid-twentieth century they presented an increasing challenge to America’s domestic and foreign policies.

The bitter legacy of resentment and hatred of white Southerners towards the Yankees, and their culture of white supremacy and racism towards the African Americans, was brought out forcefully in the 1950s and 1960s by the resurgence of the Civil Rights Movement, which followed the Supreme Court's judgement against segregated public schools in 1954.<sup>27</sup> This produced a white backlash which was articulated at every level in southern society through the establishment of White Citizens Councils, the re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan the reiteration of states' rights and white supremacy, and the fears of miscegenation. Then the Centennial celebrations of the Civil War (1961-65) provided the opportunity to celebrate the Lost Cause in all its finery, bravery and romanticism. The Confederate battle flag was hoisted over state capitols as a gesture of defiance against the federal government's support for desegregation and the descendants of the Confederacy donned the 'gray' to re-enact their victory at the first battle of Bull Run in July 1961. Although civil rights legislation was passed, the re-emergence of the Right, symbolised by Nixon winning the presidential election in 1968, led to a period in which the process of desegregation slowed down, then left to 'benign neglect' and finally stopped under Ronald Reagan.<sup>28</sup> The liberal consensus had disintegrated, to be replaced by a neo-conservatism increasingly supported by a more fundamentalist religious attitude to the issues of the day.

Towards the end of the 1990s there were heated campaigns in Mississippi, South Carolina and Georgia as to whether the Confederate battle flag – the 'southern cross' – or its incorporation into state flags should continue to be flown from state houses.<sup>29</sup> Neo-Confederate organisations took root.<sup>30</sup> Whilst these and other similar groups are very small they represent far more. In the elections of 2000 the Republican governor of South Carolina was voted out of office because he had 'abandoned the Lost Cause and called for the [Confederate] flag's removal,' while the Supreme Court in Virginia ruled, in 2001, that a state law banning the burning of crosses was unconstitutional.<sup>31</sup> However the swing to the right has not completely taken over as the new prosecutions of civil rights murderers, who were cleared by all-white juries in the 1950s and 1960s, testifies.<sup>32</sup> And in 2003 Trent Lott, the leader of the Republicans in the senate, was forced to resign after he paid tribute to Strom Thurmond, the one-time 'Dixiecrat' segregationist presidential candidate, as the man that the country should have voted for in 1948.<sup>33</sup>



## The Civil War and popular culture

Just as the political landscape continuously references back to the Civil War so too has popular culture used and reused the war.<sup>34</sup> Immediately after the war the South sought to justify its defeat by inventing the Confederate tradition around the myth of the Lost Cause. This helped to explain to nineteenth century Southerners how and why they lost and helped them to cope with the cultural implications of defeat.<sup>35</sup> Southerners also found other ways of dealing with their loss through Confederate Memorial Days and erecting statues and memorials to remember and honour the Confederate dead. Confederate veterans met in local 'survivors' associations' and formed a 'national' organisation in 1889 - the United Confederate Veterans (UCV).<sup>36</sup> The UCV had support organisations – the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) founded in 1894 and the United Sons of Confederate Veterans (USCV) founded in 1896 – which were dedicated to ensure that the Confederate tradition would live on, as well as the magazine, the *Confederate Veteran*, established in 1893.<sup>37</sup>

What developed in the South in the years following the Civil War was a new culture that embraced all levels of white society in its attempt to control both the past and the future. As the historian Ray Browne says, '(p)opular culture is the way of life in which and by which most people in a society live.....It is the every day world around us.....It is the way of living we inherit, practice and modify as we please.....it is the dreams we dream while asleep.'<sup>38</sup> Jim Cullen comments that the

power of popular culture is to offer large numbers of people explanations of why things are the way things are – and what, if anything can be done about it. Infuse this power with history – explanations of how things came to be the way they are – and you have a potent agent for influencing the thinking, and thus the actions, of millions of people.... Popular culture has played a critical role .....[in] remembering the Civil War.<sup>39</sup>

The way the South established a memory of the Civil War shows how collective memory can be moulded and the past distorted. Southerners realised that the right education was essential for the Confederate memory to continue. The UCV and the UDC established historical committees to promote a 'proper' appreciation of the war by establishing a 'true' history and to see that children were taught only a Southern understanding of the war.<sup>40</sup> The UCV also proposed that the term 'Rebel' should no longer be used and the Civil War called 'The War Between the States.'

The North was equally guilty of distortion.<sup>41</sup> To the South's 'alibi' of the Lost Cause the North took the high ground of the 'Treasury of Virtue,' waving the 'bloody shirt' at each election, forgetting their changes of policy from saving the Union to a gradual freeing of the slaves through military necessity.<sup>42</sup> The North had also established a popular culture of Memorial Days, veterans associations - the Grand Army of the Republic - and memoirs – especially those of Sherman (1875) and Grant (1884) - reminiscences and monuments to the dead.<sup>43</sup> Military reminiscences became popular: *The Philadelphia Weekly Times* published a series of articles from March 1877 by former Union and Confederate soldiers and civilians; while the Century magazine's 'Century War Series', 1884-87 was published as *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* in 1887.<sup>44</sup> The editors of the *Century* wished to engender 'no passions or prejudices of the war, and wanted articles that demonstrated 'sacrifice, resourcefulness, bravery.'<sup>45</sup>

It was not until the late 1870s that the Civil War theme was taken up by novelists with the emphasis upon reconciliation, usually through marriage.<sup>46</sup> Novels of the 1880s, writes Nina Silber, were dripping with sentimentality and devoted to reunion. Many had a plantation theme and sold well.<sup>47</sup> By the 1890s the Civil War theme came to dominate the theatre.<sup>48</sup> The novels and plays showed that the planter aristocracy fascinated northerners as well as southerners, by the 'drama of failure, economic deprivation and finally redemption with northern assistance.' It also showed that the North, which had ultimately fought a devastating war to free the slaves, had accepted the South's racial codes. In play after play the African Americans were portrayed as loyal and devoted servants to their Confederate masters.<sup>49</sup> So acceptable had this portrayal become, that Southern racist novels, such as Thomas Nelson Page's *Red Rock* (1898) and Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s *The Leopard's Spots* (1902) and *The Clansman* (1905) became best sellers.<sup>50</sup> Only in Steven Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) is the war treated in a more realistic way. But the book is devoid of ideology and any discussion of causes. After World War I the interest of novelists in the Civil War lapsed until the late 1920s when major novels began to appear at regular intervals.<sup>51</sup> Many were later made into films and, in the last decades of the twentieth century, into television films.<sup>52</sup>

For most Americans the memory of the Civil War was the memory of the battles and Gettysburg became the war's symbolic representation. It was the 'sacred ground' of

memory,<sup>53</sup> the place where Union and Confederate veterans could celebrate 'a joint and precious heritage.' Due to the bravery and heroism shown by both sides, committed as they were to strong, heartfelt principles, Gettysburg became an 'American' victory in which no side lost. It also became a memory of whiteness, as African Americans were barred from the Decoration Day procession from 1869.<sup>54</sup> At the fiftieth anniversary '(o)nly obscure references exist of any black veterans...[although] numerous black men worked as camp labourers.'<sup>55</sup>

Gettysburg continued to be celebrated. The seventy-fifth anniversary (1938), the last one at which the 'Blue and the Gray' came together, was overshadowed by the threat of war in Europe. The centennial in 1963 was overshadowed by the civil rights struggle. However, at the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary (1988) the landscape of memory had changed. War was no longer an act for brave, honourable and principled men to fight great causes but an act of political decision in a global power game. America had suffered a psychological, if not a military, defeat in Vietnam. The Civil Rights Movement had altered forever many of the beliefs and institutions that had existed even twenty-five years before. The theme in 1988 was 'Peace Eternal in a World United' – giving the celebration 'an inter-racial and international flavour.'<sup>56</sup> The following year the film *Glory* was released - the first, and only, film so far to place African Americans fighting in the Civil War at the centre of the narrative.<sup>57</sup>

The 'desire to connect to history' became increasingly significant in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>58</sup> In the 1950s a Civil War sub-culture emerged with the establishment of round tables, the collection of memorabilia and re-enactments.<sup>59</sup> This interest was accelerated by the coming centennial celebrations, which, following *Brown*, southerners used to protest against the perceived threats to their culture and way of life. The celebrations became an opportunity to display the superiority of the Old South – in cultural activities and displays and in battlefield re-enactments.

Re-enactments were started by the veteran organisations in the nineteenth century but a century later they took on the mantle of 'living history' satisfying a curiosity about, and a need to connect to, the past. Interest waned in re-enacting after the Centennial, which coincided with the passing of the Civil Rights legislation and the divisive Vietnam War, but picked up again in the 1980s as America recovered its sense of authority under the

ultra-conservative President Reagan. Realism now became the central theme. Re-enactors research their roles in great depth wanting to experience 'living history' and have little interest in the causes and consequences of the war.<sup>60</sup> The same is true with living history museums where the past is filtered by nostalgia through sanitised recreations of Ante Bellum society and authenticity replaces criticism. The Civil War became just the battlefields where women and race were barely mentioned. The Mississippi Division of Tourism Department, for example, only mentions race in the context of loyal 'former slaves who fought for the Confederacy.' However, the commercial possibilities of inclusion are now being exploited.<sup>61</sup> Disney's new theme park on American history emphasises racial and ethnic minorities, slavery and industrial exploitation.<sup>62</sup> In the last few years even Civil Rights venues are becoming part of heritage.<sup>63</sup>

Supporting and feeding this interest in the Civil War are a number of popular and professional magazines,<sup>64</sup> discussion groups such as the Abraham Lincoln Association, and a large number of internet sites devoted to the Civil War. However many of the sites are pro-Confederate ranging from individuals to established organisations such as the SCV. In an age that increasingly acknowledges the emancipationist vision of the Civil War the SCV unashamedly follows the Lost Cause myth and is dedicated to 'insuring that a *true history* (emphasis added) of the 1861-1865 period is preserved.' The 'peculiar institution' of slavery is not mentioned.<sup>65</sup> The attitude of the SCV may be single-focused and against the gathering mainstream approach to America's past but is it so very far away from the greatest influence in popular culture in its memory and representation of the Civil War, Hollywood and increasingly, since the 1970s, television?

### **Hollywood and the Civil War**

Hollywood picked up and developed its interest in the Civil War from the popular culture of the 1900s. Newsreels of veteran commemorative meetings and ceremonies had been captured on film from 1896 and proved very popular. Story or feature films based on the Civil War began in 1908 and were produced almost every year until the mid-1970s with the majority occurring during four cycles - 1908-17, 1934-42, 1946-58 and 1964-72. As Hollywood's vision of the Civil War became integrated into popular culture so the memory of the Civil War became Hollywood's memory.



Despite being a new medium Hollywood did not adopt a different approach in representing the Civil War but drew upon the images present in other forms of popular culture. What Hollywood did, however, was to redefine it in moving images and sell it to a new mass audience – the working class communities and the new immigrants in the cities. These images were repeated in hundreds of films until the image of the Civil War was Hollywood's image. While the first films had taken a Northern view, by 1911 two-thirds took a Southern perspective with slavery shown as a benign system and African Americans – normally white actors in black face – confined to the background as loyal servants.<sup>66</sup> The Civil War was a white war with, generally, a happy ending of reconciliation through marriage – the 'family' (America) reunited again.

Hollywood's early focus on the Civil War showed the nascent industry how American history could be used for entertainment. It was stimulated by the growing interest in the coming semi-centennial, which Congress agreed to celebrate with a special ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg. America looked positively to this 'Peace Jubilee' and filmmakers saw a great business opportunity to participate in the national celebrations.<sup>67</sup> In the years up to America's entry into World War I in 1917, Civil War films became a major genre peaking in 1913 to coincide with the celebrations at Gettysburg. (See Appendices 1 and 5.)

Civil War films were successful because they satisfied the interests of the producers, exhibitors, leaders of society and the audience. The producers, who were mainly white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and the exhibitors, who came mainly from a variety of entrepreneurial and immigrant backgrounds, shared the same objectives.<sup>68</sup> They wanted to retain control of the industry, fight off the European competition, displace their main leisure competitor, vaudeville, and attract the middle classes.<sup>69</sup> They also shared the same objectives as the religious and political leaders of society, the Progressives, who wanted a safe and controlled leisure industry, which would also provide moral up-lift and education for the immigrant and working class communities. After the compromise agreement over censorship in 1909,<sup>70</sup> film content began to change to exhibit more wholesome American values. Civil War films based on family, duty, honour, sacrifice and patriotism with eventual reconciliation and unity provided an appropriate counter to the more *risqué* European films. Because they depicted American history it was felt that they would attract the middle classes as well as giving the new immigrants an understanding of America.<sup>71</sup>

The producers knew that audiences were fascinated by war, as they had shown 'tremendous interest' in the siege of Port Arthur in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905-6.<sup>72</sup> In 1908 Burton Albee visited a large number of Nickelodeons and found out that what the public wanted was 'action, pathos, patriotism' – but only if there 'were battles, uniforms and fighting – and love stories with happy endings.'<sup>73</sup> Civil War films had these in plenty. The story lines were far more accessible to the immigrant and working class communities who, it was felt, would be unable to 'recognise the narrative events of a classic tale, work of literature, a popular play, a familiar myth unless they were in some way explained.'<sup>74</sup>

The second cycle of Civil War films appeared in the mid-1930s. The experience of the Depression had altered public attitudes and Hollywood had produced films that challenged traditional values by calling 'into question sexual propriety, social decorum and the institutions of law and order.'<sup>75</sup> However, with Roosevelt's election America's mood changed and Hollywood returned to its Civil War myths, steeped in nostalgia and stressing unity, family, reconciliation and a determination to overcome adversity. The films were safe conveyors of America's moral values as Hollywood clamped down on sex and violence through the strict implementation of the industry's Production Code. As the 1930s ended with war in Europe, *Gone with the Wind* (1939) became the defining, and most successful, film of the Civil War. But the political and social environment was changing and, whilst the film retold the war and Reconstruction from a southern perspective, there were indications of change in its representation and presentation of the issues.

World War II changed attitudes to race and more African Americans appeared in significant roles as Hollywood yielded to the continual pressure from the civil rights movement.<sup>76</sup> After the war Hollywood produced message pictures attacking racial prejudice and anti-Semitism. Civil War films began to reflect this change through expressions of equality and a change in the representation of African Americans. However, under the intense pressure of anti-communism even indirect criticism came to be seen as an attack on America. African Americans disappeared from Civil War films as they reverted to narratives of personal, North-South conflict either during the war or in post-war westerns. Unity and reconciliation often came as North and South joined together to fight against uncivilised forces – represented by the Native Americans. The future had to be won on the screen, as the Cold War had to be won in the present.



From the late 1940s Hollywood was under pressure from internal and external forces, which ultimately changed the industry but also influenced the films it produced. Externally there were the intertwining pressures of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement: internally there was the challenge of television, declining audiences,<sup>77</sup> the loss of control over exhibition<sup>78</sup> and the increasing costs of production. Hollywood turned to the western, and especially the Civil War western, to offset its losses.

In the mid-1950s the changes in the political agenda following *Brown*, and the ending of the more virulent aspects of anti-communism, emboldened Hollywood to resume addressing issues of race and national identity in Civil War films. But the increasing unrest in the South over civil rights and the failure of high profile Civil War films<sup>79</sup> created uncertainty, which even the Centennial celebrations could not resolve. Faced by the prospect of showing Civil War conflict on the screen with civil rights conflict on the streets Hollywood turned away from the Civil War and the celebrations to less controversial and more patriotic subjects.

Hollywood returned to the Civil War after John F. Kennedy committed himself to civil rights legislation in 1963. The Civil Rights Movement was now legitimised in the face of the South's brutal reaction to desegregation. Hollywood returned to where it was ten years earlier promoting a better understanding of race relations and national identity. The Civil Rights Movement had achieved the breakthrough that Allen and Gomery suggested had happened twenty years before. African Americans appeared in positive roles, freeing the slaves was now an accepted war aim, black male/white female attraction a possibility and far more Southerners than Northerners became the villains. However, the escalating war in Vietnam and continuing social unrest at home altered the contours once again. Civil War films became a vehicle to explore the nature of the war in Vietnam and the issues it raised at home. There were few winners in this new environment with films ending in violence, without unity or reconciliation, reflecting the social unrest in America.

After America's retreat from Vietnam in the early 1970s the Civil War themes of reconciliation and unity for the future of America were no longer relevant. The liberal coalition had been destroyed in the late 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement had splintered and radicals sought individual solutions in alternative lifestyles and the recognition of

minority interests. The Civil War faded from Hollywood's agenda. In the last quarter of the twentieth century only eleven Civil War films were produced (see Appendix 7).

- <sup>1</sup> William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), 81.
- <sup>2</sup> David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Thomas J. Pressly, *Americans Interpret their Civil War* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 18.
- <sup>4</sup> This showed uniformed African-American soldiers, a sailor and women, children and elders seeking strength together. The listing of names was completed in 1999. Available from: [afroamcivilwar.org/discover.html](http://afroamcivilwar.org/discover.html) (accessed 2 February, 2004).
- <sup>5</sup> Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, p.4. The term the 'Lost Cause' was probably first used by Edward A Pollard in his 1866 book *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. However it was Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy, with his two-volume memoir *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* in 1881 that encapsulated the case and rhetoric of the South's defence and firmly established the Confederate tradition with the Lost Cause at its heart.
- <sup>6</sup> Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 118.
- <sup>7</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3.
- <sup>8</sup> Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 12, 16. Also see Ira Berlin, 'American Slavery in History and Memory and the Search for Social Justice,' *Journal of American History*, 90 (March, 2004), 1251-68.
- <sup>9</sup> Roy Rozenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) book review by Ann Fabian, *Reviews in American History*, 27, (1999), 630-35.
- <sup>10</sup> This was Walter Williams of Houston Texas, who died in December 1959. Robert Cook, 'From Shiloh to Selma: The Impact of the Civil War Centennial on the Black Freedom Struggle in the United States, 1961-65', in Brian Ward and Tony Badger, (eds.), *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1996), 134.
- <sup>11</sup> Typing 'American Civil War' on Google gave 79,000,000 hits (14 January, 2005).
- <sup>12</sup> Hugh Tulloch, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 104.
- <sup>13</sup> Charles Joyner, ' "Forget, Hell!": The Civil War in Southern Memory' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 23.
- <sup>14</sup> Bruce Catton, *America Goes to War* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1958), 68-9.
- <sup>15</sup> Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 3-4.
- <sup>16</sup> Shelby Foote in *The Civil War*, a documentary for television by Ken Burns, 1990.
- <sup>17</sup> Alan T. Noble, *Lee Considered* (1991), quoted in Robert Lang (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation: D. W. Griffith, Director* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 5.
- <sup>18</sup> Susan-Mary Grant, 'Civil War and American Nationalism' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J Parish (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 189-206.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, first published 1988), 72; Shelby Foote in *The Civil War*, a documentary for television by Ken Burns, 1990.

<sup>20</sup> The tenth Amendment to the Constitution states that 'The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.' Robert Birley, (ed.), *Speeches and Documents in American History, (Volume I) 1776-1815*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 173.

<sup>21</sup> Tulloch, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era*, 110.

<sup>22</sup> See Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction in 1863 and his Second Inaugural Address in 1865 in Birley, (ed.), *Speeches and Documents in American History*, 286-9, 299.

<sup>23</sup> This lasted from 1866-72 and mainly provided humanitarian aid, legal protection for labour contracts and education.

<sup>24</sup> 'Jim Crow' became a synonym for the African-American after Thomas D. Rice wrote a minstrel dance tune of that name in 1832 which became so popular with white audiences that Rice changed his name to J. C. Rice. Rice's character of Jim Crow was that of a stereotypical, elderly, lame slave who murdered the English language and performed foolish antics. The term was adopted in the 1890s when the southern states began to formalise their state laws into a code.

<sup>25</sup> In the case of *Plessey v. Ferguson* the court ruled that states could provide 'separate but equal' public facilities. This ruling lasted until the *Brown* judgement of 1954.

<sup>26</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1903, reprinted 1997), 45.

<sup>27</sup> This was the case of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*. It will be referred to as *Brown* in the text.

<sup>28</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 272.

<sup>29</sup> Over the years the 'Southern Cross' has 'become' not only the sole Confederate battle flag but also the national flag of the Confederacy. The Confederacy changed its national flag three times during the war and several different battle flags were used. Borgna Brunner, *The Learning Network*. Available from: [infoplease.com/spot/confederate.html](http://infoplease.com/spot/confederate.html) (accessed 5 June, 2004)

<sup>30</sup> For example the League of the South, the Council of Conservative Citizens, the Heritage Preservation Society and the Confederate States of America. They have policies that attack multiculturalism, defend the values of the Confederacy and some propose the repeal of laws giving citizenship to African Americans and votes to women. *The Guardian*, 18 September, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Duncan Campbell, *The Guardian*, 18 September, 2000; *Searchlight*, February, 2000, 26; *The Guardian*, 3 November, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> For example the murder of Emmett Till in 1955 and the three civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman in 1964.

<sup>33</sup> One of his campaign documents said that electing Harry Truman would mean 'anti-lynching and anti-segregation proposals will become the law of the land and our way of life in the South will be gone forever.' (*The Guardian*, 21 December, 2002). Although he lost, Thurmond received 1.1 million votes translating into 39 electoral college votes. Thomas Dewey, the Republican Party candidate, only received 189 electoral college votes. (Harold Jackson, *The Guardian*, 28 June, 2003.)

<sup>34</sup> Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 8.

- <sup>36</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 77, 81-4, 158, 267-70; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 105.
- <sup>37</sup> In 1896 children were drawn into formal organisations when some Chapters of Children of the Confederacy were formed. In 1908 the USCV dropped the initial 'U' as the initials were also being used for the veteran organisation - the United States Colored Volunteers. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 173, 105.
- <sup>38</sup> Ray B. Browne, 'Conversations with scholars of American Popular Culture' in *Americana, The Journal of American Popular Culture 1900 to the Present* (Autumn, 2002). Available from: [http://americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall\\_2002/browne.htm](http://americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2002/browne.htm).
- <sup>39</sup> Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*, 13. See also John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- <sup>40</sup> Separate history textbooks were still being produced in 1965. John T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978), 78. Celia Elizabeth O'Leary, ' "Blood Brothers:" The Racialisation of Patriotism, 1865-1918' in John Bodnar, (ed.), *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define their Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 65-6
- <sup>41</sup> Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 204.
- <sup>42</sup> Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War*, 54-66.
- <sup>43</sup> The Northern veterans were just as determined as the Southern veterans that the history of the Civil War should be taught from a Union point of view. O'Leary, ' "Blood Brothers" ' in Bodnar, (ed.), *Bonds of Affection*, 66.
- <sup>44</sup> D. W. Griffith used *Leaders and Battles of the Civil War*, which had been republished to coincide with the semi-centennial. Richard Schickel, *D. W. Griffith: An American Life, 1875-1949* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 227.
- <sup>45</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 164, 242; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 69.
- <sup>46</sup> The first major novel on the Civil War theme had been John W. De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* in 1867.
- <sup>47</sup> Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 105.
- <sup>48</sup> Evelyn Ehrlich, 'The Civil War in Early Film: Origin and Development of a Genre' in Warren French, (ed.), *The South and Film* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 70-1
- <sup>49</sup> Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 105-8.
- <sup>50</sup> *The Clansman* became the chief source for the second part of D. W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* (1915).
- <sup>51</sup> Between 1916 and 1928 not one book on a southern subject appeared on the best seller's list. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*, 44.
- <sup>52</sup> Among the most well known novels are Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), which continued the Lost Cause tradition; James Street's *Tap Roots* (1942), which looked at the war from a Southern abolitionist viewpoint; Ross Lockridge, Jr.'s, *Raintree County* (1948) taking a Northern abolitionist view; Robert Penn Warren's *Band of Angels* (1955) which examines the question of identity through the eyes of a mixed-race woman in the South; Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels* (1974) about the *Battle of Gettysburg* told from the soldier's perspective on both sides; and Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* (1997) an anti-war novel of the war and home-front in the South.<sup>52</sup>



<sup>53</sup> Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 90, 104-8, 119 (note 6).

<sup>55</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 385.

<sup>56</sup> Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 102.

<sup>57</sup> The film is based on the formation, and the military engagement at Fort Wagner, of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Colored Infantry led by Robert Gould Shaw. The only Civil War memorial to African American troops, before 1998 was included in the Shaw Memorial erected in Boston on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1897.

<sup>58</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1990), 36.

<sup>59</sup> Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 97. The first round table was established in Chicago in 1940 and there are now about 200. Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*, 180.

<sup>60</sup> Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*, 173-98.

<sup>61</sup> Tara McPherson, 'Both Kind of Arms: Remembering the Civil War,' *The Velvet Light Trap*, 35 (1995), 3-4.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at US History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>63</sup> Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 307-9.

<sup>64</sup> Magazines such as *Civil War Times*, *Civil War News*, *Blue and Gray* and *America's Civil War*.

<sup>65</sup> Available from: <http://scv.org/about/whatis.asp> (accessed on 16 June 2004).

<sup>66</sup> There were no film production companies in the South until the winter of 1908-9 when Kalem went to Jacksonville in Florida and very few exchanges – companies that organised the distribution of films. David Robinson, *From Peep-Show to Palace: The Birth of the American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 115.

<sup>67</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 385.

<sup>68</sup> Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-15* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 35.

<sup>69</sup> Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 8-18.

<sup>70</sup> The New York Board of Motion Picture Censorship – soon renamed the National Board of Motion Picture Review – was funded by the film industry. Robert Sklar, *Movie-made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994, first published 1975), 30-32.

<sup>71</sup> Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: the Birth of Mass culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 52-5; Sklar, *Movie-made America*, 30-2; Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 432, 488; Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 18.

<sup>72</sup> Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 446.

<sup>73</sup> Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 167.

<sup>74</sup> Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 54. During the last three decades there has been considerable discussion about the composition of the early cinema audience. Up to the 1970s it was accepted that it was

mainly composed of members of the working class and new immigrants; then research into local neighbourhoods and smaller towns pointed to a considerable middle class clientele as well. However, as the Nickelodeons served local communities, it would seem that Eileen Bowser's view that the 'Nickelodeon audience was neither monolithic nor immutable is probably about right.' Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 2. A discussion of the latest research on early audiences can be found in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, (eds.), *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> Sklar, *Movie-made America*, 175.

<sup>76</sup> Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 159.

<sup>77</sup> The number of television sets had grown from a few thousand in 1946 to 42.2 million in 1956. Weekly admissions halved between 1946 and 1956, from its peak of ninety million, with the development of suburbs and the growth of local leisure activities at some distance from the downtown movie theatres. Irving Bernstein, *Hollywood at the Crossroads: An Economic Study of the Motion Picture Industry for the American Federation of Labor Film Council*, (California: AFL Film Council, December, 1957), 2, 73.

<sup>78</sup> *United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc., et al.* The case had been started in 1938 as an anti-trust suit brought by the Justice Department against the five major studios for their control of the main distribution outlets and forcing conditions on the independent exhibitors. It had been delayed in 1940 with a trial agreement on consent decrees but was resumed in 1944. The Supreme Court proposed the break up of vertical integration within the industry and the 'divorcement' of the majors from exhibition by the sale of their theatres but remitted the final decision to the district court, which confirmed the decision in 1949. Sklar *Movie-Made America*, 272-4.

<sup>79</sup> *Raintree County* (1957), *Band of Angels* (1957).

## Chapter 3

### ‘MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIA’: CIVIL WAR FILMS FROM 1908-1941

*What the American public always wants is a tragedy with a happy ending.*<sup>1</sup>

To understand the cultural implications of Hollywood's representation of the Civil War after World War II it is essential to look at its approach during the previous four decades. In that period Hollywood not only established an image of the Civil War but reinforced views of race and national identity that confirmed the exclusion of many of its citizens from their civil rights.

The period from 1908 to World War II saw the production of several hundred Civil War films including the two best known and financially most successful – *The Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*) and *Gone with the Wind* (*GWTW*).<sup>2</sup> The vast majority, however, were produced during the first decade, which coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War (1911-15).<sup>3</sup> Filmmakers saw an opportunity to join in the remembrance and the public was eager to see those not too distant visions of the past. (Fifty years later Hollywood's approach to the hundredth anniversary would be very different.) During these decades the films were consistent in their presentation of white supremacy imbued with nostalgia for a once stable, agrarian civilisation. However the experience of the 1930s – economic hardship and the rise of fascism – began to change Hollywood's outlook.

#### The Early Films

There is a certain irony in that the American Civil War achieved popularity with an audience that most likely knew little of American history. The early story films reflected the hardships, struggles and losses that the immigrants had experienced and Civil War films had similar themes with family-centred dramas of suffering, hardship, separation and reunion.<sup>4</sup> The Progressives too could applaud the values that these films demonstrated. They could provide moral uplift to the immigrants and working classes and educate the potential citizens in American values. There were no sex scenes or innuendoes as all relationships tended towards the ideal and romantic. True love and sacrifice ruled. Heroes and heroines were committed to a cause. Violence was limited mainly to battle scenes. If

there was cowardice, it was either dealt with by the family, or the coward was redeemed. Compassion could be shown to enemies, as they were all Americans. Honour, integrity, patriotism, duty, coping with adversity - all had a place.

The rise of the Civil War film followed the rise of American patriotism, imperialism and national identity. In 1897 the American Flag Association was founded and soon the Stars and Stripes was flying on public buildings and in school classrooms. The Spanish-American War brought the country together for the first time since the Civil War and accelerated the movement towards reconciliation that had been developing - especially between the veterans of North and South. This combination of patriotism, reconciliation and identity reached its apotheosis with the semi-centennial celebrations when the Southern President, Woodrow Wilson, declared that 'we have found one another again as brothers and comrades.....our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten.'<sup>5</sup> The 'brothers and comrades' here were white brothers and white comrades. The African American veterans were excluded in the same way as they had been excluded from the victory celebrations in 1865. The nation was conceived and defined in solely white terms. As Gary Gerstle argues, there were 'two powerful and contradictory ideals.....that decisively shaped the history of the American nation in the twentieth century - civic nationalism and racial nationalism.' At the beginning of the twentieth century it was racial nationalism that was far more powerful.<sup>6</sup>

This racial nationalism was supported by the development of Social Darwinism and the emerging 'scientific' theories of race, which graded races not only by colour but also by location. Even European immigrants were graded.<sup>7</sup> Race mixing through miscegenation was seen as race suicide. 'Indiscriminate mixing,' Theodore Roosevelt said, 'would inevitably lower a race's intelligence, morals and courage.'<sup>8</sup> This was directed not only against African Americans but towards all non-white races.<sup>9</sup> Most northern historians accepted the 'scientific' explanation of race that indicated that African Americans were inferior.<sup>10</sup> They also accepted the conclusions of James Ford Rhodes that while slavery was the sole cause of the war it was also due to circumstances outside human control, and Reconstruction had been a colossal mistake.<sup>11</sup> The Southern apologists who had created the myth of the Lost Cause were rewarded, for by the early 1900s their view had come to dominate all forms of popular culture.

These early Civil War films set the framework, the imagery and the general perception of the Civil War in popular culture for the next six decades. Hollywood had quickly discovered that the more romantic, noble and heroic ideals to be found in the defeated South were attractive to both North and South.<sup>12</sup> Southerners, who started the war, were generally portrayed as the heroic underdogs. Many films centred on wealthy Southern families, slave-holders living in mansions or on plantations with the war intruding into their ordered, civilised life of 'moonlight and magnolias.'

The southern man was a man of honour, integrity, courage, chivalry and responsibility – encapsulated in the Southern code of conduct. A Southern man did his duty without question. He was fearless and loyal to the cause. Anything less would bring shame on the family.<sup>13</sup> Heroism, death, or sacrifice to the sacred cause demonstrated the commitment of all Southerners to their ideals. Tracing the way that Hollywood represented this Southern code over the years indicates the changes in attitudes to the South and to the Civil War.

Southern women became heroines by delivering messages, acting as spies, or carrying out missions which ended in sacrifice for the Confederate cause.<sup>14</sup> They were also presented as the ideal woman, loyal, loving and supportive who had to be protected from the roughness of the Northern forces and the unseen but ever present threat of rape by the uncivilised African Americans. Rape was not represented in Civil War films before *Birth* but it was implied from the earliest days of film. Many of the films ended in some form of reunion or reconciliation within the family or between families previously at war, signifying the reunion of the nation.<sup>15</sup>

African American inferiority was continually reinforced through the medium of popular culture and through its consumption - they were forced to sit in segregated areas in most theatres in the north as well as throughout the south.<sup>16</sup> It is little wonder then that the early cinema reflected African Americans in a demeaning, stereotypical fashion in what film catalogues categorised as 'coon' films.<sup>17</sup> They were presented as happy, helpful and smiling, always present to serve, defend and die for their masters and mistresses.<sup>18</sup> They were loyal supporters who were at ease with their status and fearful if it was going to change. Not only were African Americans loyal to the point of death they were also presented as asexual creatures – the males obsequious, the females large and motherly - seeming to have no real relationship or life between them: their only role was to serve.<sup>19</sup>



This was another Lost Cause myth - the faithful servant – popularised from the 1890s with tributes in the *Confederate Veteran* magazine and with proposals to erect formal monuments in their honour.<sup>20</sup>

In those early years when Hollywood was creating its version of the Civil War, it rarely, if at all, represented the repressive side of slavery, the Abolition movement, miscegenation or Reconstruction. There was no need to examine the lives of the slaves as they were of no consequence while slavery was presented as the caring and beneficial institution that the African Americans needed.<sup>21</sup> To show the other side would have reversed the cultural image and done significant damage to whole process of reconciliation. Abolitionists were ignored until Griffith used them at the beginning of *Birth* to justify his view of the causes of the war.<sup>22</sup> He portrays them as stern, unbending figures who used the African Americans as propaganda for their misguided cause. Miscegenation however, touched on the deepest psychological and racial views of the Southern cause in which ‘one drop of blood’ would determine a person’s racial category. This attitude embraced the Lost Cause ideal of the pure Southern woman who had to be protected from the monstrous, rapacious, animal-like ‘brutal black buck.’<sup>23</sup> The irony of this argument was that it had not stopped white males from fathering mulatto children, generally by rape, and creating a ‘mongrelised’ race of light-skinned African Americans.<sup>24</sup>

Before *Birth* few films addressed the Reconstruction period.<sup>25</sup> This was a difficult subject in an era of white, national reconciliation since it would have to deal with the continuing subjugation of the South by northern whites or by their southern white and black scalawag accomplices. In *Birth*, although the narrative is centred on one Southern family, the film examines the immediate period of the Reconstruction era in more general, and therefore national, terms.<sup>26</sup> However what distinguishes *Birth* from other Civil War films was the presentation of the fear of black domination, rape and intermarriage. Freeing the slaves therefore, opened up society to anarchy and chaos - the complete break down of the social structure and the death of the white race and civilisation.<sup>27</sup> Griffith’s answer was the Ku Klux Klan, which saves the South (America) from the corruption and anarchy of black rule.<sup>28</sup>

The film’s most significant legacy was to establish the racial images of whiteness and white supremacy for the audience. Miscegenation was not seen again in Civil War films

for forty years. The film transported the sectional myth of the South into a myth of white American nationalism, which, reinforced by similar films, became part of white memory, for several decades.<sup>29</sup> The film received the backing of the Progressives, while the National Board of Review applauded its 'historical accuracy and educational value.'<sup>30</sup> It was also a boon to the film industry, which had been seeking to attract the middle class.

Ironically, *Birth* aided the civil rights movement, as it became the first film to create a national protest led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although the protests had only limited success, they helped to heighten black awareness and identity across the country and ensured that controversy would follow the film wherever and whenever it would be shown.<sup>31</sup> While rumours circulated in the 1930s, and again in the 1950s, that a remake was being considered it has never been remade. Additionally, their protests ensured that there would not be any further representation of the sexually aggressive black buck until the Blaxploitation movies over fifty years later. Racism, race and intermarriage disappeared from the screen leaving only the faithful 'good souls' and the comic roles, which greatly reduced the extent of African American representation in Hollywood films.<sup>32</sup> But the issue of race continued on screen both through its absence and through the stereotypical representations of African Americans.

### **World War I and decline**

Interest in Civil War films declined sharply in 1917 and did not pick up again until the depths of the Depression. Once war was declared Hollywood fully supported the cause of national unity. After the war there were new heroes to be remembered, another group of veterans to honour. Filmmakers too must have wondered how they could follow Griffith's *Birth*.<sup>33</sup> Besides, society was changing.

Hollywood's idealised and romantic representation of male/female relationships in Civil War films was contrary to everyday experiences. Young middle class women were 'discarding Victorian sexual morality' and breaking out of the moral codes of their parents' generation, by going out to work in increasing numbers, being more independent and now had the vote.<sup>34</sup> In the year that *Birth* showcased the sanctification of marriage as the highest Christian ideal, a survey recorded that 60% of exhibitors wanted more *risqué* pictures.<sup>35</sup> A Paramount memo stated, that '(w)hat the public demands, today is modern

stuff with plenty of clothes, rich sets and action. Nothing prior to the Civil War should be filmed.’<sup>36</sup> With modernity and sex high on the agenda both the plot and the social relevance of the Civil War movie were rapidly becoming outdated.

In the 1920s the studios saw women as their main audience. War movies, were avoided: Civil War movies are, by definition, war movies. The ‘woman’s picture’ became a selling point and surveys seemed to support this.<sup>37</sup> Women too were the subject of what Steven Ross calls ‘cross-class fantasy films,’ which stressed class harmony as everyone sought the benefits of a capitalist economy. This was a long way from the Civil War messages of class exclusiveness in a static, agricultural, slave-based economy.<sup>38</sup>

The experiences of World War I must have changed perceptions of what war was all about. It was no longer a nostalgic episode, or a subject for ‘genteel lovers’ or a triumphal romp in Cuba but a hard slog of death and mud with increasingly powerful weapons of destruction.<sup>39</sup> Nor did it last long enough to alter the inherent racism in the army or improve race relations in general. Many African Americans who left the south to work in northern factories found that competition for jobs and housing soon created hostility, as did the stationing of African American troops in the south.<sup>40</sup> With a background of race riots and lynchings in a country supposedly united, plantation films of the Civil War and its era would hardly help the war effort.<sup>41</sup> African American soldiers, who had patriotically enrolled, returned home to an unchanged South - a situation that was to be repeated after World War II.

Nevertheless Civil War films continued to be made. Between 1919 and 1933 there were thirty-three releases and three re-releases of *Birth* – the last one in 1930 with an added sound track. Griffith had obviously taken some of the criticism to heart because he changed the ending of the film to incorporate the national anthem and a colour shot of the American flag. The Klan had been displaced as the symbol of bringing forth the new nation by far more universal and acceptable symbols. This was an early indication of change – though not very much in the representation of race relations - in how Hollywood was beginning to modify its version of the Civil War.

In the same year that Griffith released his revised *Birth* he also released *Abraham Lincoln*.<sup>42</sup> This treated Lincoln as the saviour of the Union – a logical follow on from

Lincoln's death, which was portrayed in *Birth* as the great tragedy for the South. Three years later the first film of *Little Women* was released at the cusp of the Depression and the New Deal. Here, a family was faced with having to make the best of a fall in their income in a time of war, but they still performed charitable tasks for those who were less well off. It did not matter that the film was set in a Northern town as the war was but the faint background to a show of traditional family values – it could equally have been set in a Southern town without impairing the message. The whole country could share in the family's sense of togetherness as America tried to cope with the effects of the Depression.

### **Revival: 1934-41**

It was Roosevelt's election that indirectly re-ignited Hollywood's interest in the Civil War, which continued until the attack on Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt restored faith in America and provided a vision of national unity through the New Deal. Hollywood responded by abandoning the social realism films of the early 1930s and replacing them with musicals and nostalgia. Its films reaffirmed faith in the American system and values.<sup>43</sup> In doing so Hollywood revived the past and the past included the Civil War.<sup>44</sup> Civil War films had values that had seemed to be abandoned during the 1920s.

At the same time there was additional pressure on the film industry from the Catholic Church to produce family friendly films. Under this pressure, and Hollywood's own financial crisis, Hollywood decided to direct 'its enormous powers of persuasion to preserving the basic moral, social and economic tenets of traditional American culture' by fully implementing the Production Code.<sup>45</sup> The Code ensured that controversial issues, or anything that might criticise the country and its institutions or damage exports, were avoided, softened or changed.<sup>46</sup>

The Production Code gave the film industry a set of moral standards. However, these not only presented a distorted view of America to America and to the rest of the world, but also gave Hollywood the perfect excuse as to why it need not tackle particular subjects, or why it presented them in a particular way. In addition it was inherently racist. It prohibited 'white-slavery' but not black slavery; 'miscegenation' - but that excluded the many millions of mulattos who were the product of miscegenation; profanity – even 'damn' – but not 'Nigger'; and 'the sale of women, or a woman selling her virtue' but not the sale of



women into or within slavery.<sup>47</sup> The irony of this institutional racism was that it was accepted by the ethnic minority (Jewish) producers who were themselves subject to racism (anti-Semitism). At the same time many Jewish activists were in the forefront of pressing for civil rights for the African Americans.

America in the 1930s needed examples of her former greatness and the means to recover it. Setting examples in a nostalgic past removed them from direct criticism of the present. *Little Women* extolled the family. *Judge Priest* (1934) was a whimsical, reconciliationist look at how a small Border State town resolved its conflicting loyalties whilst retaining its memory of the war. It both re-enacted and turned history on its head with a southern judge defending false accusations of rape against a young African American and defeating the modernising northern lawyer in an election.<sup>48</sup> While films like *So Red the Rose* (1935) and *GWTW* ended in defeat for the South, they both showed the resilience and courage of white Americans, who, in defeat, were able to face the future and rebuild their lives, not by collective action, but through the hard work of the individual and the family.

With the return of the Civil War film came the return of the southern racial myths. However, Hollywood began to take a slightly different view of race in the mid-1930s. African Americans became more visible, with more rounded and varied roles, with speaking parts and easy relationships with the white characters.<sup>49</sup> While most remained servants, some were shown helping the war effort as *In Hearts in Bondage* (1936).<sup>50</sup> The nearest that Hollywood came to a slave insurrection was in *So Red the Rose*. With Union troops close to the plantation, the slaves refuse to work. 'All this is yours,' says Cato, one of the field hands. However, Valette, the daughter of the plantation owner, persuades them that the Yankees will make them work whether they are free or not and appeals to their former harmonious past. This defuses the situation and they follow her back to the house in one mass of singing nostalgia. Not only has white supremacy been vindicated and restored but also the limitations of the New Deal welfare programmes have been exposed. People cannot get something for nothing: welfare support, like freedom from slavery, is a temporary measure. The future depends on work, responsibility and organisation. Hollywood was fully behind the New Deal. Valette's attitude towards the African Americans is the same as that of Shirley Temple in her two Civil War films of 1935 – *The Little Colonel* and *The Littlest Rebel*: African Americans are basically children at heart who need to be handled with firmness and sweetness. And there is the loyal, faithful slave



in *Rainbow on the River* (1936) in which, reminiscent of *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911), she cares for the orphaned boy of her former white master until relatives in New York find him and he is forced to move north.

Whilst many of these Civil War films were still full of the Old South mythology the Civil War western began in 1937.<sup>51</sup> Setting the Civil War in the west started the process of removing the 'moonlight and magnolia' image. It also heralded a change of class emphasis away from the aristocratic planters to the more 'democratic' classes of working people – a change that would be taken up fully after 1945. Of the six films produced (1937-39) the most outrageously Reconstructionist in its Southern sentiments was *The Texans* with images straight out of *Birth*. After a damning, pro-South statement about Reconstruction, a drunken African American soldier staggers along a pavement forcing an elderly couple off the sidewalk, while others are shown gambling at cards on a confiscated grand piano.<sup>52</sup> A later scene shows carpetbaggers planning how to squeeze more taxes and profits out of the defeated South. At the end, reconciliation is achieved through the mutual respect of the Union officer and the Confederate hero who together push a wagon out of a river. But even here the southern view is being changed when a plan to start a guerrilla force – like the Ku Klux Klan – is called by the southern heroine, who had been prominent in trying to continue the war, 'childish..... this is America, we govern by law not by night riding.'<sup>53</sup> This a-historical statement reflected more on the rise of fascism in Europe and was designed as a warning to America. The way that African Americans were depicted was obviously not relevant.

Griffith's film lay like a shadow over the filmmakers. David O. Selznick admitted that he had considered remaking *Birth* around the end of 1935 but decided against it because of the need to represent the Klan in a way that would not meet with the current perceptions of the 'Klan of our times.'<sup>54</sup> When it came to producing *GWTW*, Selznick struggled with the book's representations of race, the white South, its Ante Bellum myths, the treatment of the Union army and Reconstruction. Selznick resolved this by toning down the more extreme racialism in the book and even by reversing events.<sup>55</sup> Running through the film is the commentary from both Scarlett and Rhett about the 'sham and shame' of the Old South.<sup>56</sup> This is a radical departure for Civil War films as it attacks the South's fundamental beliefs and shows that underneath good manners, the feelings of superiority and the honour codes there is hollowness, self-deception and hypocrisy. There is a further

departure when, in the discussion on the possibility of war, Scarlett's father admits that slavery is the cause of the poor relations between North and South.<sup>57</sup>

*GWTW* is the watershed in Civil War films. While covering the same ground as *Birth* it had a different focus. *Birth* looked back to reproduce the past in the future. In *GWTW* there is no going back. There is only the way forward - the way that Scarlett takes. She is not afraid to labour in the fields or go into trade. She takes the New Deal way of getting a little help in order to succeed. She pokes her nose at the southern code, which puts honour and dignity above realism and success. She is the New South just as she is the 'new woman' of the twentieth century. Her struggles to survive the destruction all around her must have resonated with all those who had to cope with the years of Depression - and America in 1939 was still depressed. Ironically it would take another war to lift the economic gloom.

The film's impact was staggering. Unlike the failed 'epic' *So Red the Rose*, which had been shunned by northern audiences, *GWTW* was universally applauded.<sup>58</sup> It caused problems for the African Americans and liberals. Whilst it could be castigated for its traditional southern interpretation, the racism had been toned down and the prominence of the black actors was welcomed as a significant shift in Hollywood's racial attitude.<sup>59</sup> As Donald Bogle comments the black actors had 'transformed their slaves into complex human beings.'<sup>60</sup> The film seemed to reflect the times. America had survived the nadir of the Depression and was rebuilding. Scarlett therefore represented not only the South, but the country in her fight for survival, in her determination 'never to be hungry again.' 'The film shows,' says Edward Campbell, 'that a society strong in its beliefs can survive anything.'<sup>61</sup>

*GWTW*'s success seemed to herald a renewed interest in the Civil War genre. The 'plantation' film appeared to be back. So stirred were the aged trio of Griffith, Aitken and Dixon that they considered a sound and colour version of *Birth* to rival *GWTW*.<sup>62</sup> But it was not to be. The war in Europe was impinging ever closer. Roosevelt's victory in the 1940 elections dealt a severe blow to the isolationists who wanted America to keep out of the war. The two years following *GWTW* saw Hollywood not only helping to prepare America for war but continuing to change its approach to the Civil War. The underlying theme became unity with Hollywood turning to its favourite icon Lincoln<sup>63</sup> whilst the *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) – about John Brown - for all its many faults, became a warning

about fanaticism.<sup>64</sup> More significantly the films were becoming pro-North in their sympathies and were beginning to show southern characters as villains and traitors.<sup>65</sup> This can be seen in *Stagecoach* (1939) where the southern 'gentleman,' the immaculately dressed aristocratic Hatfield, 'a notorious gambler,' represents the 'fag-end of southern gentility.'<sup>66</sup> He lives under an assumed name, treats everyone, except the southern lady, with disdain and is the only one to be killed.

For the African Americans the changing economic circumstances, and then the war, became another opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism and their citizenship. Participating in America's wars was not about supporting white America, as the slaves had done in *GWTW* when they marched through Atlanta on the way to dig fortifications, but to fight against the forces of racism at home and abroad. The different political outlook of the 1930s recharged the civil rights movement and on the outbreak of World War II it was stronger than it had been for twenty years. During the war the NAACP gained many more supporters and won some notable victories in the courts.<sup>67</sup> Even the army, under pressure from the liberals in the Roosevelt administration, began to acknowledge that it had to change its attitude to the African American troops. African Americans gained respect and self-esteem and also benefited from the upturn in the economy. They looked forward to maintaining these gains when peace resumed. After Pearl Harbor, Hollywood all but stopped producing Civil War films although *GWTW* continued to be shown. If Hollywood was to resume its interest in the Civil War when peace came would it return to the formula of its most successful film or would it take an entirely different approach?

<sup>1</sup> William Dean Howells, *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1990, quoted in Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Wang and Hill, 2002), 191.

<sup>2</sup> Both films were adapted from popular novels: *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, published in 1905 and *GWTW* by Margaret Mitchell, published in 1936. Griffith only used *The Clansman* in the second part of *Birth* – on the Reconstruction period.

<sup>3</sup> The majority of these films were one-reelers, and lasted no more than fifteen minutes.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 494.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>7</sup> The Anglo-Saxons and the Nordic peoples were considered superior to all other Europeans. Southern Italians, for example, were seen, especially in the South, as closely resembling African Americans and called ‘white-skinned negroes.’ Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 175.

<sup>8</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 3-6.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis L. Gould, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, first published 1988), 75-6.

<sup>11</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 357-8. But those in control of the history syllabuses in the South would not accept versions that did not accord with the Lost Cause myths. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 295-9.

<sup>12</sup> Celia Elizabeth O’Leary, ‘“Blood Brothers:” The Racialisation of Patriotism, 1865-1918’ in John Bodnar, (ed.), *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define their Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Cowardice in battle was particularly heinous as shown in such films as *The House with Closed Shutters* (1911) and *The Honor of His Family* (1910). It was also related to alcohol, which reflected the temperance campaign by the Progressives, and led to the Eighteenth (Prohibition) Amendment in 1919.

<sup>14</sup> In such films as *A Special Messenger* (1911), *Nan, the Girl Spy* series (1909-12), and *The Price of Victory* (1914).

<sup>15</sup> In such films as *A Dixie Mother* (1910) and *One Flag at Last* (1911).

<sup>16</sup> In 1913 a ‘colored’ woman who refused to sit in the balcony of the Victoria Theatre, Rochester, New York, lost her suit to defend her civil rights to sit where she wanted. The balcony was reserved for ‘Italians and the rougher elements.’ Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Coon’ is an American term meaning a raccoon, a sly fellow, as well as a pejorative term for a Negro. Examples of these are *Dancing Darkies* (1896), *Watermelon Contest* (1899), *A Night in Blacksville* (1900), *Shooting Craps* (1900), *The Chicken Thief* (1904), *Nigger in the Woodpile* (1904) and *Avenging a Crime or Burned at the Stake* (1904).

<sup>18</sup> There are a comparatively large number of such films including: *The Confederate Spy* (1910); *Uncle Peter’s Ruse* (1911); *Hearts and Flags* (1911); *Mammy’s Ghost* (1911); *None Can do More* (1912); *A Gentle Volunteer* (1912); *Old Mammy’s Secret Code* (1913); *A Slave’s Devotion* (1914); *In the Fall of ’64* (1914).

<sup>19</sup> In films such as *The Old Oak’s Secret* (1914), and *His Trust* and *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911).



<sup>20</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 284-91.

<sup>21</sup> The Southern historian Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, even proposed the reintroduction of slavery in 1904. Hugh Tulloch, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 37.

<sup>22</sup> Abolitionists were rarely represented – apart from the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* films and the two John Brown films – *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) and *Seven Angry Men* (1955).

<sup>23</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films, New Third Edition* (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1994, first published 1973), 10-14.

<sup>24</sup> There were a few, non-Civil War, films that examined miscegenation in which the heroine – it never applied to the hero – finds that she has Negro blood and has to give up her white lover as in *The Crimson Stain* (1913) and *A Gentle Volunteer* (1916) in which the heroine dies protecting her lover, and in *The Bride of Hate* (1916), in which a white man is tricked into marrying a light-skinned mulatto.

<sup>25</sup> *Swords and Hearts* (1911); *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911); *An Orphan of the War* (1913); *My Fighting Gentleman* (1917).

<sup>26</sup> The story concerns two families, the Camerons from the South and the Stonemans from the North but the film is related through the experiences of the Camerons and is mainly set in the South.

<sup>27</sup> Robert A. Armour, 'History Written in Jagged Lightning: The Realistic South Versus the Romantic South in Birth of a Nation' in Warren French, (ed.), *The South and Film* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ironically, for a further thirty years, Griffith's means of saving the white race, the Ku Klux Klan, in Civil War films was either eliminated or only hinted at. This is an interesting comment on Hollywood's perceptions about race relations since the Klan's ride to rescue white America at the end of *Birth* was considered one of the most exciting and significant episodes in the film.

<sup>29</sup> Quotations are inter-titles from *Birth*.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Rogin, 'The Sword Becomes a flashing Vision: D. W. Griffith and The Birth of a Nation' in Robert Lang, (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation: D. W. Griffith, Director* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 276.

<sup>31</sup> Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Film: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Ewing, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 195-213. Staiger follows this through to the late 1960s.

<sup>32</sup> Terry Christensen, *Reel Politics: American Political Movies from Birth to Platoon* (New York: Blackwell, 1987), 19.

<sup>33</sup> The film company, Selig, attempted to do this with the twelve-reeler *The Crisis* in 1916 – the longest and most expensive film that company had made. It relates the Civil War from a northern perspective with honest disagreements over slavery. Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, 124. On the whole it was 'a slow and disappointing film.' Spears, *The Civil War on the Screen and Other Essays*, 45-48.

<sup>34</sup> Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 202. Women's suffrage was achieved by the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, August 1920.

<sup>35</sup> A survey carried out for Universal Pictures and reported in *Motion Picture Weekly*. Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (London: Johnathan Cape, 1990), 8.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, reprinted 1993), 137, gives the date as 1918, but Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994, first published 1975), 94, gives 1917.



<sup>37</sup> Melvyn Stokes, 'The Civil War in the Movies,' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 68.

<sup>38</sup> Steven J. Ross, 'The Rise of Hollywood: Movies, Ideology, and Audiences in the Roaring Twenties', in Steven J. Ross (ed.), *Movies and American Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 67, 80.

<sup>39</sup> Evelyn Ehrlich, 'The Civil War in Early Film: Origin and Development of a Genre' in Warren French, (ed.), *The South and Film* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981).

<sup>40</sup> About 330,000 African Americans moved North during World War I, Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 89.

<sup>41</sup> There were major race riots in East St. Louis, Illinois in July and in Houston, Texas in September 1917.

<sup>42</sup> Griffith's interest was stimulated by the success of Carl Sandburg's, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1926).

<sup>43</sup> By 1933 nearly one-third of all theatres had been closed, prices were down a third and audiences were 25% lower than the high point of 1930. Of the eight majors Paramount was in bankruptcy, RKO and Universal in receivership and Fox under reorganisation. Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 162.

<sup>44</sup> Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 189-94. Sklar also says that the 'majority of important money-making pictures had little to do with contemporary life. While this is true of the subject in Civil War films the present e.g. the New Deal certainly did.

<sup>45</sup> Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 161-4, 175.

<sup>46</sup> This was particularly true in regard to films, which had a left-wing bias such as *Black Fury* (1935) and *Blockade* (1938).

<sup>47</sup> Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 285-90.

<sup>48</sup> As exemplified in the Scottsboro case.

<sup>49</sup> There was an increase in the number of African American parts from 1927 to 1940. Their voices were more suited to the new sound medium and they had music and rhythm as well. Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 26.

<sup>50</sup> Helping in the construction of the Union gunboat *Monitor*.

<sup>51</sup> If one disregards the Jesse James/Quantrill films, the earliest western that has some relationship to the Civil War appears to be *The California Mail* (1929).

<sup>52</sup> 'There is no period in the life of any nation so disorganised as that which follows a great war. History calls it the 'Reconstruction Period' yet it was an era of lawlessness – of smouldering hates – of oppression. The American Civil War was waged for a great ideal. But hardly had the smoke of battle cleared before the ideal was forgotten. The South was ruled as a conquered enemy. Northern politicians wallowed in an orgy of power – of plunder by organised mobs – of tribute, of tyranny and death.'

<sup>53</sup> 1938 was the seventy-fifth anniversary of Gettysburg and was the last major celebration of that battle with veterans present.

<sup>54</sup> David O. Selznick in a memo to the screen writer Sidney Howard, then working on *GWTW*, 6 Jan. 1937. Available from: [xroads.virginia.edu](http://xroads.virginia.edu) (accessed 11 May, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> The Klan is never mentioned nor is Rhett Butler's killing of an African American. Scarlett is attacked by a white man and it is the African American, Big Sam, previously the foreman of her field hands, who saves her. A watermelon scene was removed as was the word 'nigger.' The North only appears in the guise of

carpetbaggers and scalawags and the Union army is represented by one 'deserter' soldier, whom Scarlett kills.

<sup>56</sup> Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> 'It's time we made them understand that we'll keep our slaves with or without their approval.'

<sup>58</sup> Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, 360.

<sup>59</sup> Hattie McDaniel received an Oscar for her performance as Mammy.

<sup>60</sup> Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 88.

<sup>61</sup> E. D. C. Campbell, *The Celluloid South* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee, 1981), 134.

<sup>62</sup> Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, 68.

<sup>63</sup> *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) as well as the twenty-one minute short *Lincoln in the White House* (1939). He is also seen in the pro-South *Virginia City* (1940), telling the Southern belle who had come to plead for her Northern lover's life that 'we are not enemies but friends.'

<sup>64</sup> Bowsley Crowther commented, in the *New York Times*, 21 December, 1940 about this film on John Brown, that 'for anyone who has the slightest regard for the spirit – not to mention the facts – of American history it will prove exceedingly annoying.'

<sup>65</sup> In such films as *Colorado* (1940) and *Dark Command* (1940).

<sup>66</sup> Edward Buscombe, *Stagecoach* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), 24.

<sup>67</sup> *Smith v. Allwright* 1944 by the Supreme Court. This was seen as a 'Second Emancipation' and voter registration efforts were stepped up across the South. Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 200-1.

## Chapter 4

### COLD WAR, WESTERNS AND HOPE: CIVIL WAR FILMS 1946-55

*All races and religions, that's America to me.*<sup>1</sup>

The success of *Gone with the Wind* (GWTW) and its popularity throughout World War II would have suggested to Hollywood that similar films would be equally successful in the post-war period. America, however, rejected the aristocratic planter films. It had become a more cohesive society as the requirements of total war broke down race, class and gender barriers. The spirit of the New Deal and its liberal agenda continued to influence government departments and government supported organisations.

The experience of African Americans too had given them encouragement and confidence to think that racial discrimination could be ended. However the peace did not produce the breakthroughs in race relations that the war had promised. Truman appeared sympathetic but other, stronger forces were at work. The Republicans made gains and the Democratic Party split over the election platform of 1948. Overshadowing all was the Cold War spiral of hysteria that brought progressive measures to a halt. Any criticism of America became an attack on American values and way of life.

Hollywood, under investigation by the House Un-American Committee (HUAC),<sup>2</sup> embraced anti-communism and stopped producing liberal 'message' pictures or any that might be construed as un-American. Hollywood moved the Civil War to the west – a location that Hollywood, from its earliest films, had envisaged as being white. Without plantations there was no need for servants, without African Americans the post-Civil War quarrels were personal and became a quarrel between white Americans, who would come together in the face of a common enemy.

African American progress towards inclusion and civil rights, which had flourished during the war, rapidly declined - especially in the South.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) continued to challenge educational segregation and inequality in the courts. This finally resulted in the *Brown* judgment of

1954, which opened up the issues of race relations and civil rights across America and gave African Americans renewed hope.

## **World War II: the watershed**

American historians see World War II as a watershed in their history.<sup>4</sup> During those years America re-dedicated itself to democracy as it fought a racist, totalitarian regime in Europe and an imperial regime in Asia. It was a turning point in race relations, providing a momentum for change; a time when national and African American goals intersected. While African Americans prospered in the economic upsurge of the war, as many moved from the south to work in the war industries, their leaders pressed hard for equality. The threatened March on Washington produced the Fair Employment Practices Committee (1941). There were appointments to senior administrative posts in the government, recognition in the armed services through the training of officers and pilots and the production of *The Negro Soldier* (1944) which was eventually shown to all recruits.<sup>5</sup> The NAACP continued to win discrimination battles in the courts and increased its membership tenfold by 1945, while the 'Double V' campaign – victory over racism abroad and inequality at home - summarised African Americans' hopes for the future.

As in World War I, Hollywood was keen to support the war effort. This was not just an altruistic show of patriotism but a defensive tactic against mounting federal anti-trust suits and congressional hearings.<sup>6</sup> However, these were put into abeyance on condition that Hollywood co-operated with government control of wartime propaganda through the Office of Wartime Information (OWI).<sup>7</sup> The OWI's main concern was whether a film would assist the war effort. Its outlook was 'mild social democratic and liberal' and this clashed with Hollywood's own Production Code, which was designed to exclude specific material.<sup>8</sup> The NAACP also put pressure on Hollywood not only to produce more integrated movies but also to 'amend their portrayals of blacks in movies.' This began to happen in the multi-ethnic 'platoon' movies, although only one African American was generally included.<sup>9</sup> With an increasing audience, more people were experiencing 'integrated' movies on a regular basis and this was seen as a possible harbinger of improved race relations.<sup>10</sup>

Hollywood almost abandoned Civil War movies during World War II as they showed a divided country and a demeaning representation of the African Americans upon whom the government relied to assist the war effort. Only three films were produced but each had a theme relating to the war. *The Ox Bow Incident* (1943) was a 'dark and sombre study of mob violence and social injustice' in which a former Confederate officer, in full uniform, despite it being 1880, forces a posse to lynch three innocent men.<sup>11</sup> The film was based on an anti-Nazi book by Walter Van Tilburg Clark of 1938 and was a warning against fascism, although the uniform, the lynching and the mob rule pointed a finger at the South. What was significant, however, was that the voice of humanity and reason was expressed through an African American preacher. *Tennessee Johnson* (1943) created considerable opposition during its production as it attempted to whitewash Johnson's Reconstruction record and to smear the character of the Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens. Although the final script was softened the 'acceptable' compromise 'to promote national unity' meant the exclusion of African Americans.<sup>12</sup> The film was also a warning about the threat of too much executive power. The third film, *Raiders of Ghost City* (1944), was a spy serial with a Prussian gang masquerading as Confederates.

As the war came to its close there were mixed messages for America. In Hollywood, the Motion Picture Alliance<sup>13</sup> continually attacked the NAACP as being linked to 'reds' and *Variety* warned scriptwriters against infiltrating pink and red propaganda.<sup>14</sup> The armed forces continued to be segregated and restrictions and discrimination resulted in inter-racial conflict and resentment. Racial tension increased in the north as the migrating African Americans competed for jobs and housing, which resulted in riots, while whites organised their neighbourhoods against integration. Domestic political considerations forced Roosevelt into a more cautious approach to improve race relations as Republican gains made him increasingly reliant on southern Democrats. Any agitation for equality was considered a distraction from the war effort. He did nothing to prevent southern states from ignoring the Fair Employment Practices Committee and dropped the liberal Henry Wallace as vice-presidential candidate for the 1944 election.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless the war had produced social change. There were more women and African Americans employed in industry and around one third of African Americans now lived outside the South. African American experience, protest and successes had given them renewed confidence in pushing for equality and civil rights. The New Deal had survived



the assault of the Republicans and liberal New Dealers were still in Washington. Popular culture, in the shape of Hollywood, was taking a more integrated and less racist line. The question remained, how would white America respond when the over-riding need for national unity was no longer a restraining influence. And, more specifically would Hollywood resume the Civil War genre, and, if so would it follow on from the success of *GWTW*?

Hollywood had ended its 1930s cycle of Civil War films with an assault on fanaticism in *The Santa Fe Trail* (1940) and *Dark Command* (1940), with the patriotism of *They Died with their Boots On* (1941) and with the gritty determination of Scarlett O'Hara to rise above adversity - and America achieved all three by 1945. When Hollywood returned to the Civil War it was in many respects a different Civil War although the main themes – reconciliation, national identity and romance – continued. America, too, had changed. The war had transformed the economy and America had emerged as the dominant power in the world. It also had a new enemy – its former ally the Soviet Union - which stood for everything America disliked : collectivism in its social and economic arrangements, centralised power, atheism and an absence of free speech and civil liberties. It also challenged America's power and influence world-wide, offering to the anti-colonial nationalist movements and to Western Europe an alternative to capitalism.<sup>16</sup>

### **Hollywood and the Cold War**

The Cold War had a fundamental influence on America. Anti-communism had been an issue since the Russian revolution of 1917. It now took on the mantle of an internal witch-hunt with fears that the federal administration and many other organisations harboured communists and fellow travellers.<sup>17</sup> Business leaders feared that unions would be taken over by communists and all strikes were portrayed as being communist inspired. Many Republicans fought the 1946 elections on the basis that the Democrats were soft on communism and their success triggered further anti-communist measures.<sup>18</sup> The fear of communist subversion was stoked up by allegations of spy rings, Russia's explosion of the atomic bomb, the Berlin Blockade, the trial of Alger Hiss, the 'loss' of China, the trial of the Rosenbergs and the invasion of South Korea. By the time that Senator Joseph McCarthy produced his 'list' of 205 names in 1950, anti-communism had a stranglehold on America.<sup>19</sup> Communists were purged from all organisations. Civil rights activists were

charged with disloyalty and silenced. Any sign of dissent was considered to be un-American and was labelled 'communist.' To those on the Right, anti-communism was far more important than civil rights, so to alter the status quo would be to capitulate to the Communists. Any proposed civil rights legislation would therefore not succeed.<sup>20</sup>

Amidst the growing hysteria Hollywood became the subject of the first investigation by the HUAC in 1947. Hollywood quickly capitulated and in November 1947 the Motion Picture Producers Association issued its Waldorf-Astoria statement pledging not to employ communists or anyone advocating the overthrow of the government. It then sought to re-establish its patriotic credentials by establishing a blacklist, firing hundreds of employees and producing dozens of anti-communist movies – most of which made a loss.<sup>21</sup>

Yet even before HUAC investigated Hollywood, it had already begun to establish its Cold War credentials. In *The Fabulous Texan* (1947), Jim McWade, a former Confederate officer, returns home to find his state over-ridden by carpetbaggers and a despotic state police, who are abusing the fundamental freedoms of the press and of assembly. To make the allusion to the Soviet Union even clearer McWade is told that, '(t)he land of your birth is becoming a Siberia.' The film was dedicated to the 'war weary and liberty loving people of Texas' who had fought for freedom against a corrupt government - similar to that threatening America.<sup>22</sup> The implication was clear to the ex-servicemen who were returning home: peace had brought a different kind of fear – one that was close to home, perhaps living next door. The values of the western, American values, had to be defended. The fact that Texas had fought for the South and for the continual enslavement of four million African Americans was overlooked in promoting the Cold War message.

Apart from the HUAC investigations, Hollywood, in the late 1940s, was under increasing pressure from various directions. The federal government had re-opened the anti-trust 'Paramount' suit, which ended in the 'divorcement' judgement of 1948;<sup>23</sup> audiences were declining; income from overseas markets was reducing; there were more independent companies, directors and film stars; and labour costs were increasing.<sup>24</sup> At this point Hollywood returned to the Civil War genre. It was not, however, a return to the plantation. That setting had lost its appeal. In 1946 Disney released *Song of the South*, which, while set in the post-Civil War period, was full of Old South nostalgia and attracted much criticism.<sup>25</sup> The OWI had been abolished in 1945 but its legacy of change lived on.

Hollywood could no longer show the 'happy darkey' of the Old South but neither could it show the opposite. In the context of the Cold War, films set on a plantation demonstrated to the world that America still celebrated its aristocratic and racist past whilst the world was looking forward towards a free and classless society.

The plantation represented a static, class-led society, therefore, by removing the plantation, America demonstrated that it had democratised the Civil War. Now the focus was on towns-people and farmers: all the characters were of the same social standing. Consensus was America's response to the Cold War. America was a classless society of freedom, opportunity and enterprise as opposed to the authoritarian, collectivist classless society of the Soviet Union. The west therefore was not only the Garden of Eden it was the future where democracy and free enterprise went hand in hand in building a new future after a terrible war – just as America was doing after World War II. The free enterprise system, as exemplified by Tom Dunson in *Red River* (1948), reflected America's imperialism of the past and its present day power. Dunson claimed that the Mexican owner of the land he had appropriated, lived a long way away and had effectively stolen the land from the Native Americans – so he had as much right to it as anyone. This was how America was built through strong men claiming and defending what they had won, regardless of the civil and legal rights of others, as the Native Americans and the African Americans had experienced.

There was a further reason to abandon the plantation - the legacy of *GWTW* hung over the genre. It would take a strong story to interest Hollywood. Such a book was *Raintree County* whose film rights were bought by Loews Incorporated in 1947 even before its publication in 1948.<sup>26</sup> However it would be another ten years before it would come to the screen. But there was another book which made it to the screen in 1948 – *Tap Roots* by James Street. Published in 1942, and based on a true incident, it tells the story of the Dabney family and their neighbours who lived in a Mississippi valley and tried to stay neutral during the Civil War. The book examined in some detail the pros and cons of slavery and secession, the passions on both sides as war approached and then the final fight to retain independence with the 'legally free people of colour [who] don't like to be called Negroes' fighting alongside them.<sup>27</sup> The novel can be considered an answer to the pro-South, pro-slavery view of *GWTW* and also to the fascist views of racial superiority being fought against in Europe.<sup>28</sup> When the film was released Hollywood was attempting to

recover from the HUAC investigations and the Dabneys' fight against the Confederacy could be read as Hollywood's fight against HUAC. Hollywood took its usual approach and the Dabney's prevailed.<sup>29</sup> The film, however, lost much of what it might have contributed to the civil rights debate as the romantic element dominated in the manner of *GWTW*.

The brief period, 1945-49, between the end of World War II and the rabid anti-communism of the Cold War saw a continuation of the liberal agenda. Hollywood produced a number of short anti-racist films such as *The American Creed* (1947). Frank Sinatra sang 'All races and religions, that's America to me' in *The House I Live In* (1946). Liberal directors, who had trained in the politically charged 1930s, such as Carl Foreman and Stanley Kramer, moved into mainstream production whilst the decade ended with a number of 'message' films on the themes of anti-Semitism - *Crossfire* (1947) and *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) and racism - *Home of the Brave*, *Lost Boundaries* and *Pinky* (all 1949) and *No Way Out* (1950).

There were other indications of a more inclusive and tolerant society - especially in popular culture. Professional sport, show business and the theatre became more integrated. Plays and novels too examined racism whilst academics undermined the cornerstones of racial superiority. There was hope too on the political front. Truman promised to continue the election pledges of 1944 to provide better housing, education and health care and an 'economic bill of rights.' In 1946 he appointed a Committee on Civil Rights and supported its wide-sweeping civil rights conclusions. His election programme of 1948 - the 'Fair Deal' - was a promise to extend the New Deal and civil rights legislation. In June, he ordered the desegregation of the army by Executive Order 9981 and in the November election defeated the 'Dixiecrat' challenge.<sup>30</sup> The Justice Department began assisting civil rights suits through the courts in *amicus curiae* briefs from 1948, while in California the Supreme Court overturned the state's anti-miscegenation statute.<sup>31</sup>

This liberal attitude found expression in Civil War films. *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947)<sup>32</sup> addressed racial equality with a plea for tolerance and civil rights.<sup>33</sup> Just after the Civil War Henry Carson wanders into a divided rural Missouri community. He had 'signed up for the Union army....till we won and there was peace, and there was a good free place for everyone to live in. We fought because we believed it didn't make any difference what colour a man's skin was....that's what I signed up for and that's what I'm still fighting



for.’ There was one problem with this plea for racial tolerance – there was no African American in the film, as *The New Yorker* scathingly pointed out.<sup>34</sup> Other reviewers picked up the theme of tolerance and understanding although the *Los Angeles Times* pointed to ‘a conscious evasion of bigger issues.’ The *Hollywood Independent*<sup>35</sup> praised it as a ‘sensitive, warm and uplifting story of America’s growth during a period of internal chaos’ – a comment that had a large degree of resemblance to the America of 1947 with strikes, fears of communist subversion, inter-racial violence and demands for racial equality. However, at least the words were said. At the end, Henry unmasks the night riders, who are all Southern sympathisers. They used the same tactics as the Ku Klux Klan in burning the barns and houses of their fellow Southerner sympathisers to force them to leave in order that they could buy their land. Hollywood had hardened up the book’s image by adding in Henry’s speech for tolerance and excluding Northern sympathisers from the night riders. The book had included one reference to a ‘nigger’ but that was 1937 when reconciliation and Southern sympathies were the norm.<sup>36</sup> The world had moved on.

Another film, *Stars in My Crown* (1949),<sup>37</sup> also carried a plea for tolerance and understanding in the face of ‘racial bigotry.’ Again greedy townspeople, using the ‘cloak of the Ku Klux Klan,’ attempted to drive out an elderly, free, African American from his land, which he refuses to sell to the local mine owner.<sup>38</sup> He is saved from being lynched by a former Confederate Christian minister who then goes on to prove the value of faith to a young, atheist doctor. Hollywood changed the period of the film from the original 1900s of the book to just after the Civil War making the analogy with the present day more forceful. This film carries the most obvious Cold War message. If there are Americans who have racist tendencies they can be shamed into abandoning them. American values, American beliefs will prevail and those beliefs and values are articulated through Christianity and firmly located in the family. What more could Hollywood do to set out an alternative to the godless, collectivist Soviet Union? The film was very well received and given awards by the Freedom Foundation and religious organisations.<sup>39</sup>

In the Cold War, the ideological battle was just as, if not more, important than images of conflict and violence. America had to demonstrate the superiority of its values - freedom, democracy, individualism, law and order, free enterprise, the family and religion – to the world and Hollywood was its most important medium. *Little Women* (1949), for example, is a family centred story in which the mother does good works rather than going out to earn



a living. The daughters grow up to marry with only Jo leaving home to earn her living as a governess. The accent on the family could be contrasted to the Soviet Union where communal facilities for child-care allowed women to continue to work. In America the cultural assumptions were that women should be at home bringing up the children and being good housekeepers and companions to the male breadwinner.<sup>40</sup> The mother therefore is central to the family. She is like Lincoln caring for the nation in time of great stress and looking after those less fortunate.

Mrs March, in *Little Women*, is the wife of a preacher and Christianity has a high profile in Civil War films again demonstrating the contrast with the godlessness of communism. It can be seen in *Count Three and Pray* (1955) where a former hell-raiser turned parson, who fought for the North, returns to his southern town and eventually wins over the townspeople to reconciliation through his determination and Christianity. In *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951) Henry is guided back to his regiment and away from his cowardice by a jolly Christian soldier.<sup>41</sup> In *Tap Roots* the local minister fully supports the Dabney's and their anti-slavery attitude.<sup>42</sup> At the end of *Stars in My Crown* those people who had previously rejected religion join the congregation and sing the title song while at the end of *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953) a service for a dead woman becomes the catalyst for reconciliation.

The theme of reconciliation had been part of Civil War films from the beginning. With the advent of the Cold War it took on additional significance: the strength of the country to resist and protect itself relied upon the unity of the people. The reconciliation and unity achieved following the Civil War was the foundation for the future. The audience looking at the Civil War in the 1950s knew that the country - or rather the larger white part of the country - was united against the forces of subversion and revolution at home and abroad. The minority 'black' part of the country, which had been demanding change in the racial arrangements, were part of that subversion as their organisations were tainted with communism and were therefore considered to be un-American. Their non-existence in Civil War films, in the great and defining moment of American history, was therefore part of American history.

Reconciliation is closely allied to that of patriotism. Patriotism had grown in the 1890s but become racialised as white supremacy was accepted as the natural order.<sup>43</sup> Civil War films

are, at heart, patriotic – but patriotism has to be seen in context. When America was at war patriotism became propaganda and needed to be demonstrated throughout the film. Patriotism in Civil War films came at the end through reconciliation and unity preceded by a narrative of conflict and disunity. When America was not at war conflict leading to unity was acceptable, as the audience knew the outcome. Most Civil War films showed a softened version of the past, which promoted patriotism regardless of the scenes of conflict, as all the participants were Americans.<sup>44</sup> Very few films are centred on the war and the years of Reconstruction in the Old South. The dead and wounded are rarely talked about or appear. Instead Hollywood provided small episodes of conflict, either at the end of the war or between veterans in the post-Civil War period generally located in the West. One film however stands out in its approach to the war and in its representation of patriotism – John Houston's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951).

*The Red Badge of Courage* is about Henry, a new young recruit, who runs away from his first skirmish but returns after a series of encounters with other soldiers, fired up with guilt that he has deserted his comrades in their hour of need. He realises that there are more important things than saving his own life – his comrades and his country. In the battle the following day Henry shows reckless courage. When the Union flag-bearer falls, Henry picks up the flag and leads the charge. The flag becomes the symbol of Henry's redemption, his courage and his patriotism. The Confederates surrender and Henry captures their flag. After the engagement the Union and Confederate troops talk together finding out where they have come from, finding out about America - just as the GIs did in World War II. 'I never spoke to nobody from Ohio before,' says a Rebel soldier, 'I never spoke to nobody from Tennessee' replies a Union soldier. 'The story,' says one reviewer, 'is about a GI with the clock rolled back a hundred years.' The book is a definition of an American, says another. However Vic Hentschy wondered why 'in these troubled times Houston would film a pic [sic] that shows cowardice, fear, raw emotion and terrors of war – even if it is the Civil War.....It is not easy to sit and watch a young American boy as a coward: then as a savage killer of his own countrymen.'<sup>45</sup> The 'troubled times' referred to the threat of communism at home and abroad and the mounting American casualties in the Korean War. Nevertheless, the ending of the film is reconciliatory and patriotic. Henry and his friend Tom march off with the regiment carrying the Union and Confederate flags side by side echoing the two flags side by side at the semi-centennial celebrations at

Gettysburg. 'You know,' says Henry, 'it's a mighty pretty country round here.'  
Reconciliation and patriotism hand in hand.

America's racial arrangements proved a fertile propaganda target for the Soviet Union, in its Cold War battle with America. It continually raised inter-racial incidents at the United Nations as examples of America's hypocrisy. These incidents also came under intense scrutiny by the world's press.<sup>46</sup> The NAACP and African American leaders tried to exploit this situation both by encouraging external criticism and using international organisations to express their disapproval and by emphasising their own patriotic and anti-communist credentials. As A. Philip Randolph, the African American civil rights' leader, told a congressional committee in 1948, 'racial segregation is the greatest single propaganda and political weapon in the hands of Russia and international communism today.'<sup>47</sup>

Whilst the State Department was well aware of America's racialised image abroad the gathering strength of anti-communism at home and Republican control of Congress prevented any civil rights legislation. Returning African American veterans soon learned that the South had not changed. Attempts at voter registration campaigns, although initially successful, were met with intimidation and murder. Segregationists used the anti-communist hysteria to argue that any attempt to change Jim Crow would not only undermine the fabric of American society but was a communist plot.<sup>48</sup> The attempt by the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which had a good record in supporting civil rights, to unionise the workforce in the South met with the same reaction - as it found out when it launched 'Operation Dixie.'<sup>49</sup> Truman trod a pragmatic path, promising much but unable to deliver, except by Executive Order.

Truman led the anti-communist crusade despite vetoing the Taft-Hartley and McCarran Acts.<sup>50</sup> He introduced the federal employee loyalty oath, prosecuted and jailed the leaders of the Communist Party, used tough rhetoric to scare the American people and gave financial help to pro-US governments facing communist subversion – the Truman Doctrine.<sup>51</sup> This was posed in ideological and moral terms – a 'free' society versus a tyrannical one. Alongside the anti-communist legislation and the various high profile congressional inquiries, all citizens were encouraged to report anyone whom they felt was a communist or showed, or had shown, pro-communist sympathies. In 1949 fifteen states passed anti-subversion laws.<sup>52</sup> By the early 1950s the 'Red Scare' had stifled dissent and

led to a purge of all the radical elements in the unions and civil rights organisations. Conditions in America resembled not so much the 'free' society as the tyrannical one that Truman had castigated. It was with this background that Hollywood's production of Civil War films, and especially Civil War westerns, increased.

### **The Civil War western**

The western had featured in Civil War films since 1937. However the 'west' of the western was a Hollywood creation with myths and traditions of its own. It was based on the frontier theory of Frederick Jackson Turner who saw the frontier as 'free land' and the 'foundation of America's democratic institutions.'<sup>53</sup> The independent westerner became the true American with courage, skill, authority and an understanding of the country, a superior individual able to survive and overcome the savage wilderness.<sup>54</sup> In the words of Colonel Dodge in *Dodge City* (1938), 'What the west stands for is honesty, courage, morality, culture.' In the west there are no shades of grey: it is good against evil, the wilderness against civilisation, the small man against big business. The western unrolled America's Manifest Destiny.<sup>55</sup> The white man had a natural right to the west and its resources but that right had to be gained through hard work. This was America's way to greatness. Progress was good and irreversible. The west created a national identity and the westerns demonstrated America's cherished core values in their purest form – democracy, equality, individualism and progress.<sup>56</sup>

The revival of the western – it too had declined during the war – fitted the age.<sup>57</sup> America had to defend and promote its free enterprise values. With Hollywood dominant across the world, outside the Communist bloc, the movie industry was in a central position to do this and Washington worked closely with Hollywood to promote America's ideology overseas. This also helped Hollywood's financial position.<sup>58</sup> It therefore combined a number of qualities that were attractive to Hollywood. The western was a popular genre with comparatively low production costs. The modest profit of westerns could keep the studios running. Their plots were easily understood, with the 'good versus evil' theme and a Hollywood romance. There was no difficulty in inserting a Cold War message into the story, which would please Washington and possibly help to soften its anti-trust stance and head off further attacks. Giving the western a Civil War setting had the advantage of



combining two great myths, which could feed off each other and give the films a much wider dramatic scope.

Hollywood's return to the Civil War film had initially been tentative – one film only, the comedy *Uncivil Warbirds*, in 1946, and two in 1947. Hollywood needed to take stock after the response to *Song of the South* and the start of the Cold War and was probably uncertain how to approach a doubly – sectionally and especially racially – divisive subject following the more liberal line taken during World War II. However, by moving the Civil War to the West, Hollywood resolved its dilemmas. Hollywood's western tradition did not feature African Americans so there was no need to write them in. This resolved another potential area of concern – that of miscegenation – as it was banned by the Production Code,<sup>59</sup> while relocating it in time (post-Civil War), and in location (west of the Mississippi), removed the need to consider the causes of the war with only the odd remark about slavery and states' rights. The location of the audience was also changing with the decline of the theatres and the upsurge in drive-ins – mainly in the south.<sup>60</sup> As *Variety* said of *Five Guns West* (1954), it is a 'fair bill filler for the outdoor market.'<sup>61</sup>

The west was born out of the Civil War. It was, like *The Birth of a Nation*, a rebirth of America. The western left the trauma of the eastern battlefields behind for a very different landscape and very different challenges. Here the struggle was against untamed nature and the Native Americans who fought the forces of civilisation. It allowed the embittered contestants to carry on their fight as they developed the future America. At the same time, under threat of attack by the alien force – the hostile 'Indians' – the films reasserted the primacy of white American unity and reconciliation as former enemies united against a common enemy in films such as *Rocky Mountain* (1950), *Two Flags West* (1950), *The Outriders* (1950), *Winchester 73* (1950), *The Last Outpost* (1951), *Escape from Fort Bravo* (1953), *The Siege at Red River* (1954) and *Apache Ambush* (1955). Here the two myths combined to defend American values and civilisation by demonising the Native Americans. They replaced the African American as the defining 'other' in a variation of Hollywood's white supremacy.<sup>62</sup>

As anti-communism took a grip on Hollywood so Hollywood's historical vision of the South changed. The southerner not only as villain but also as the threat to a future united America emerged. A film that combined these changes, *Kansas Raiders* (1950), looked at



the insidious nature of communism. The main character is William Clarke Quantrill who led a guerrilla band on the Kansas/Missouri border.<sup>63</sup> The introduction to the film speaks of his band as 'the most savage and merciless' of all the 'tribes whose organised violence terrorised the country.' His standard is a black flag<sup>64</sup> and he wears a black hat with his Confederate uniform. Quantrill, in his mixture of evil and idealism, is the Hollywood clone of a Stalin or a Hitler. He keeps no prisoners. Those that are taken are given a summary 'show' trial and then shot – including women and babies. Union troops, even those that surrender, are killed. All his new recruits have to swear an oath 'never to betray a *comrade* (emphasis added)... or ever to reveal a single secret of this organisation or a single word of this oath.' The oath makes him distinctly un-American, as Americans have to swear an oath of allegiance to their country. The oath is taken at night, by firelight, giving similarities to the Nazi rallies, Ku Klux Klan meetings with burning crosses and the secrecy of a communist cell. But like most dictators he has charm and a vision of the future and his charisma is able to sweep away any doubts, to corrupt the young and innocent, as he does with Jesse James, with his dreams of victory.

There is a similar character to Quantrill in *Horizons West* (1952), Dan Hammond, who is just as corrupt but not quite as evil. Hammond, a Southerner from Texas, who had fought throughout the war, feels that all the 'dirt, mud, blood' of the war has been for nothing. He sees northern money pouring into the local economy and wants to benefit from it. He prospers and gains power through corrupting officials, judges and lawyers. He forces people from their land through intimidation, legal trickery, burning, rustling and finally murder. His aim is to 'build a western empire' outside of state, federal or democratic control. Eventually he goes too far. His adopted brother and father set out to kill him - echoing those early silent films where any act that could bring disgrace on a southern family had to be hidden or expunged. But it is the forces of law and order that finally hunt him down. Hammond's failed attempt to carve out a western empire from American territory, as well as his death, symbolically undermines the Lost Cause argument for secession. It also underlined America's democratic values. America would remain united and democratic and would fight to preserve those ideals. There was no going back.

The Cold War anti-dictator theme occurs regularly in the late 1940s/ early 1950s films. It is found in *The Fabulous Texan* where a quasi-dictator is gathering up land and power, as in *Horizons West*, although under the legal umbrella of a carpetbagger. In *Red River*

(1948), Tom Dunson's style of autocratic leadership is contrasted and successfully contested by Matthew Garth with his democratic and inclusive approach. Similarly in *The Man from Colorado* (1948), the former Union colonel, Owen Deveraux, becomes increasingly dictatorial, after being appointed the local judge and law enforcer, as he slips into a psychotic state. Adding a touch of madness to these figures places them alongside recent examples of dictatorships and reinforces the need to defend the democratic way of life.

While these characters were openly subverting the values and processes of a democratic society there were others who were doing so in a covert and treacherous way. In *Springfield Rifle* (1952) a highly placed Union officer is a Confederate agent and is undermining the Union cause. Civil War films about spies had been made from the earliest days but these were generally about overhearing information or finding written documents or messages and getting them to the appropriate army or general – the last of this type being the comedy spy film *A Southern Yankee* (1948). *Springfield Rifle* is different and the analogy with the trial of Alger Hiss and the accusations of Senator Joseph McCarthy about the government being full of Communists in high places would not have been lost on the audience. The film deals with America recognising that there has to be a counter intelligence organisation, which can use undercover spies to infiltrate the enemy's network – 'the only answer to their espionage is an espionage system of our own,' says Colonel Sharpe. The cabinet has to be convinced, agrees General Halleck, that this is a necessary *modus operandi* because 'they think spying is beneath the dignity and honour of the American army man.' A comment suggesting that America operates to such high standards that it is only forced into these 'underhand' practices by the activities of others - meaning the Soviet Union. At the end of the film the army major who successfully carried out the undercover operation is promoted to head a newly formed Department of Military Intelligence, acknowledging, no doubt, the recent establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>65</sup>

There is a similar narrative in *Rebel City* (1953) in which senior Union officers are smuggling arms to Copperheads<sup>66</sup> who are terrorising northern Kansas. The hero, who has gone to Junction City to find his father's killer, infiltrates the organisation and they are arrested. Another film, with a more 'classic' Cold War spy scenario, is *Five Guns West* (1955). Here, the head of the Southern Intelligence Bureau in California had 'gone over to

the enemy' with all his information and gold and a special group of Confederates is organised to recapture him in an undercover operation. However, this group of long-term prisoners has little interest in the task or the South, and are only out to get what they can. In this case the gold and their freedom.

America's alleged vulnerability to attack was addressed in *The Raid* (1954). The film was based on a true event in which a group of Confederates, composed mainly of prisoners who had escaped to Canada, raided the town of St. Albans in Vermont in 1864. The town was so far from the war that it had no defences and only a handful of soldiers were stationed there, recruiting for the army. The raiders infiltrate the town, burn it and escape across the border.<sup>67</sup> The Korean War had only just ended and, whilst Canada could not be said to represent North Korea, the film demonstrated that sudden attacks could occur at any time and anywhere and America had to be prepared. This was at the time when American fears of a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union were rising as both super powers were developing ever more powerful weapons of destruction in order to gain a strategic advantage.

A film that picked up the race between America and the Soviet Union to develop a 'super-weapon' was *The Siege at Red River* (1954). In this film the super-weapon is the Gatling Gun which, transferred to 1950s America, stands for a nuclear warhead. Undercover Confederates steal the gun from Union soldiers and make their escape in a red mail van. To make the Cold War connection even clearer the Confederate leader wears a red cravat. As it is being taken south one of the Confederates steals the gun and sells it to Native Americans. However, when they attack a Union cavalry fort, the rest of the Confederate force joins in the defence and recaptures the gun. The Civil War is between white Americans, the intervention of an alien force with superior weaponry cannot be tolerated. In times of crisis America had to unite to survive.

These Civil War westerns contained the same messages as the dozens of anti-communist films Hollywood produced during the early 1950s<sup>68</sup> but they were more indirect and therefore far less frightening.

## Hollywood and civil rights

Patriotism became a white attribute only as the African Americans were marginalised into the background - despite their attempts to show their belief in the values and traditions of America. African Americans volunteered for all the major wars with hope that this would prove their loyalty and commitment to their country and in return they would be acknowledged as full and equal citizens.<sup>69</sup> However, most of white America could not accept that their racial theories and prejudices were wrong and it was left to the liberals and the communists to take up the political battle on their behalf. While comparatively few African Americans became communists, all those who were associated with civil rights organisations became tainted with the label. The anti-communist crusaders represented any demand for racial equality as being communist inspired. There was nothing that African American leaders like A. Philip Randolph and Walter White could say that appeared to have any influence, despite their well-known anti-communist beliefs.<sup>70</sup>

By 1950 the anti-communist crusade, together with a falling audience, had squeezed Hollywood into a conservative corner. Although Civil War films appeared divisive, disputes between whites could be resolved, as they were portrayed, in their new location and post-Civil War period, as disputes were over land rights, illegal actions, the bitter memories of the war, etc., and not between ideologies. In one film, *Red River* (1948), which covers the years 1851-65, the war is almost forgotten despite the fact that one of the main characters returns after four years of fighting and Tom Dunson makes a stirring speech about the iniquities of Reconstruction. The scope for African Americans had been severely limited when the plantation film had been abandoned due to an unreceptive home audience and pressure from abroad. The Civil War films with a message of tolerance had been white-led and were located east of the Mississippi. To introduce African Americans into the western would have gone against Hollywood's traditional portrayal of the west. From 1950, therefore, African Americans were rarely seen except in background shots, as in *Horizons West*, or as servants in *Drums in the Deep South* (1951) or *The Raid*. There was one film, however, that went against this trend although its nostalgia harped back to an earlier age.

*The Sun Shines Bright* (1953)<sup>71</sup> was scathingly reviewed by the *New York Times* as 'laborious, saccharine entertainment...a trumpeting tribute to the 'Lost Cause.' *Variety* saw



it as 'schmaltzy good triumphing over evil.' However the *Motion Picture Herald* considered that it would appeal to 'the less sophisticated territories, especially the South....Metropolitan newspaper writers are almost certain to disapprove, which sometimes means the plain folks will approve.'<sup>72</sup> These comments represented the broad spread of attitudes to Hollywood's view of the past at that time. Although the film is set in 1905 in a sleepy west Kentucky town it is imbued with Civil War nostalgia. The central character, the former Confederate bugle boy, Judge Priest, dispenses justice in an easy-going and humane manner campaigning against bigotry and small-mindedness. The film picks up the late 1940s egalitarian agenda and looks forward to the 'equal provision' judgement in the *Brown* decision of the following year. The irony, as in many of the post-Civil War films, is that an ex-Confederate becomes the upholder of law and order. Judge Priest defends American values even at the risk of death when he faces down a white mob wanting to lynch a young African American whom they allege had attempted to rape a white woman. In the end it turns out that the attempted rape was by a white man. But although this is near the conclusion of the film there is no underlining comment.

Unlike *Stars in My Crown*, neither the date nor the story was altered to make its message bite home. It would not have fitted the overall 'historical' view had it been located closer to the Civil War and to bring it forward would have been too close to actual experience. Leaving it in 1905 allowed the message to get through but also perpetuated the view that race relations could still be solved through white paternalism. This is shown early in the film when the young African American, later accused of rape, 'named U S Grant Woodford...[after] the Yankee general that beat Robert E. Lee,' is brought to the court by his father as he cannot get him to do anything but play the banjo. Judge Priest recognises the father. 'Are you the *boy* (emphasis added) that brought Bainbridge Corwen's body back from Chickamauga?' he asks. Uncle Pleasant Woodford replies, 'in these two arms – don't you remember....what a time that was.' Here is the Lost Cause mythology of a happy shared past between white and black, deference and paternalism. When Judge Priest is re-elected, a victory parade is held with white and black townspeople and Union and Confederate veterans all marching together while an African American choir sings 'My Old Kentucky Home.' As in *Stars in My Crown* the civil rights implications are clear: as long as the law is obeyed and interpreted fairly there is no need to change the status quo.



In the absence of African Americans from most of these films, it is the civil rights of white Americans, northerners and southerners, which were vulnerable and had to be defended.<sup>73</sup>

Prisoners are harshly treated in *Escape from Fort Bravo* (1953); miners are unable to carry on their business in *The Man from Colorado* and *Copper Canyon* (1950); farmers are subjected to intimidation and violence in *The Fabulous Texan, Dallas* (1950) and *Horizons West*; cattle drivers, farmers and soldiers threatened with summary justice in *Red River*, *The Woman They Almost Lynched* (1952), and *Hangman's Knot* (1953) or having it carried out in *Kansas Raiders*. The films indicated that ultimately the only way to obtain justice and civil rights is by the use of force. This contrasted sharply with the Civil Rights Movement, which had long believed and practised that civil rights should be obtained through peaceful means. The NAACP had been pursuing this path by chipping away at discrimination through the courts and continued to do so at the same time as anti-communism was forcing back the agenda for change through the political system.<sup>74</sup> The federal Justice Department began to support the NAACP's cases by filing *amicus curiae* briefs and using the Cold War to support its case. In the 1948 case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* the State Department's view that 'the United States has been embarrassed in the conduct of foreign relations by acts of discrimination taking place in this country' was quoted.<sup>75</sup> With the Justice Department's backing, the NAACP launched a series of cases in the early 1950s,<sup>76</sup> which ended with the historic *Brown* judgement of May 1954. That overturned the 'separate but equal' judgement in *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) which became the legal cornerstone of the Jim Crow laws.

### **The Changing South**

From the mid-1940s, pushed by the twin forces of anti-communism and civil rights, the South was changing - and so were its myths and images.<sup>77</sup> The Southern economy was being transformed from an agricultural to a partially industrial one. As a consequence many more African Americans moved north or into the southern towns. Here they were safer living in their communities and could vote - one million were registered in 1952 - and white candidates had to consider the importance of the black electorate. President Eisenhower carried out his election promise and desegregated Washington.<sup>78</sup> In popular culture the Old South was being demythologised through the novels of William Faulkner and the plays of Tennessee Williams, which, transferred to the screen, treated filmgoers 'to the new spectacle of southern decay.' These Southerners are full of 'sexual torment': the

women being mere creatures, neurotic or vicious, and the men pusillanimous and doomed.<sup>79</sup>

Hollywood's representation of the southerner was also changing. The Hollywood tradition of the Southerner had been, until *Stagecoach*, of a man of honour, a gentleman who kept his word, superior in war to the Union soldier and would not do anything underhand. He was courteous and protective to women, loyal to his friends, and to the South. They were opposed by Northerners who looted and burned, had few manners, lacked the Southern respect for codes of honour and were out to make as much money as they could from the defeated South. Some of the traditional southern attributes continued: superior gunnery (*Drums in the Deep South*), the incorruptible idealist who argues that to live without ideals is no life at all (*Border River*), the officer who will not shoot an unarmed man (*Five Guns West*), the sentry warning Henry not to stand in the moonlight (*The Red Badge of Courage*), the chivalrous charge of a Confederate troop to save Union soldiers from being overwhelmed by Native Americans (*The Last Outpost*, 1951) and the Confederate who renounces his fiancée when he realises that she is in love with a northern captain (*Escape from Fort Bravo*).

However, a darker, more realistic, character was emerging. There were Confederate guerrillas who were in the war for personal gain rather than for a cause (*Kansas Raiders* and *The Outriders*, 1950) or acted out of pure revenge (*The Raid*); night riders or Ku Klux Klan followers in (*The Romance of Rosy Ridge* and *Stars in My Eyes*); unscrupulous businessmen (*Another Part of the Forest* and *A Southern Yankee*, (1948)); southern lynch mobs (*The Sun Shines Bright* and *The Woman They Almost Lynched*, (1952)); kidnappers (*Gun Fury*, 1953); southerners who wished to undermine America's development (*Santa Fe* (1951), *The Bushwhackers* (1952) and *Kansas Pacific* (1953)); untrustworthy killers (*Five Guns West*); and men who gained power through corrupt and illegal means (*Horizons West* and *The Vanquished* 1953). In her book, *Framing the South*, Allison Graham identifies the 'cracker' as the figure on which the South was able to redeem itself by exposing the Redneck as the perpetrator of bigotry and racism - especially in civil rights films '(a)fter the *Brown* decision.' He is the 'signifier of racial ambiguity....with his class-bound vulgarity....[an] uneducated rural white man.' Yet a number of these unsavoury Civil War characters are former plantation owners (*Santa Fe*, *The Raid*), ranchers

(*Horizons West*) and businessmen (*Another Part of the Forest*, *A Southern Yankee*) who are far from uneducated or white trash.<sup>80</sup>

As usual Hollywood hedged its bets and developed a new southern myth - the Southerner who returns from the war and becomes the upholder of law and order or avenges the wrongs perpetrated by carpetbaggers and scalawags. These men, usually former officers, abide by the same Old South codes of honour as the aristocratic plantation owners. By their actions they supplanted them as the leaders of society. Without the racial dimension they can pose as the champions of democracy and American values. This is how Hollywood sees the process of reconciliation and unity. These men redeem themselves by accepting that the past is over. Those who do not become outlaws - as in *Santa Fe*, where the three younger brothers cannot accept defeat whilst the eldest brother joins in America's future by helping to build a railroad. As Hollywood avoids discussing the causes of the war these new men can forget that they had committed the gravest illegal act - to fight against their own country - and to keep other men in slavery. They now support law and order and fight against injustice. They become in fact Cold War warriors. The first post-war film to show this was *The Fabulous Texan* (1947) in which the southern hero decides that it is better to co-operate with the federal government to root out corruption and becomes a Federal Marshal.<sup>81</sup> There is a similar situation in *Dallas* (1950) where the Southern hero swaps identities with the 'dude' northern marshal to fight unlawful, vicious carpetbaggers. This character reappears in *Copper Canyon* (1950), *Santa Fe* and *The Vanquished* (1953), while in *Thunder Over the Plains* (1953) the southern hero is a captain in the Union army who is forced to uphold the law despite the predations of the carpetbaggers. This representation of the Southerner who fights for law and justice ironically stands in sharp contrast to the real Southern law officers who begin to lumber onto national television screens from the mid-1950s as civil rights abuses and scandals become national news - as in the Emmett Till case of 1955.<sup>82</sup>

Hollywood made a similar readjustment in its representation of northerners. While there were films that showed them as rapacious carpetbaggers and businessmen (*Horizons West*, *Copper Canyon*, and *The Black Dakotas*, (1954)), mistreating southern prisoners (*Hellgate*, (1952), and *Escape from Fort Bravo*), exhibiting open hatred against the South (*Two Flags West*), and engineering fights against southerners (*Santa Fe*) they increasingly depicted them as more positive and sympathetic characters. There is the Marshall in *The Man from*

*Colorado* (1948) who has to fight his former Union friend and commanding officer in order to defend the civil rights of the towns-people. Henry Bohun in *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* brings reconciliation to the community and marries the daughter of the 'fiery rebel' Gill McBean.<sup>83</sup> Union soldiers are portrayed sympathetically (*Kansas Raiders* and *Copper Canyon*) while the federal government is featured positively in *The Fabulous Texan* and in *The Man from Colorado*, and the Union army is central to the spy film *Springfield Rifle*.

### **The turning point**

Just like the Civil War eighty years earlier, World War II started a process of change in race relations: but this time the world was different. The war in Europe had been fought by a multi-ethnic army against a racist ideology. Hollywood assisted with films that gave African Americans comparatively prominent roles. The liberal agenda spawned by the New Deal continued after the war and was only halted by the anti-communist hysteria of the Cold War. Ironically the highlighting of racial incidents in America by the Soviet Union and others helped to keep the issue of race on the agenda as it became a tool in the Cold War. The stranglehold of anti-communism on Hollywood was finally relaxed when, in 1954, Senator Joseph McCarthy's attack on the army finally brought discredit on himself, and the subsequent condemnation by the Senate ended his political career. With McCarthy's demise anti-communism lost a high profile driving force and the emotional temperature was reduced. However, the pressure of anti-communism was to be replaced by the pressure from the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement continued to press for equality and full citizenship rights at every opportunity and in all forums – from local protests to the United Nations – but was squeezed, as were all other organisations, by the anti-communist witch hunts. However the turning point came in 1954 when the Supreme Court gave its judgement in the *Brown* case. 'In the field of public education,' read the judgement, 'the doctrine of separate but equal has no place.'<sup>84</sup> The importance of this to America's Cold War strategy can be seen in the fact that the judgement was broadcast within an hour by the Voice of America to Eastern Europe as an 'issue settled by law under democratic processes rather than by mob rule or dictatorial fiat.'<sup>85</sup> However the white backlash of the ultra-segregationists calling for 'massive resistance' took off within weeks with the establishment of White Citizens Councils. The Supreme Court gave no deadline even when it issued its second judgement a



year later, and there was no lead from the White House. Eisenhower expressed neither 'approbation nor disapproval' of the judgement.<sup>86</sup> The lines in the South were being drawn again.

By the mid-1950s Hollywood was also changing. Joseph Breen, the conservative Roman Catholic who headed the Production Code Administration, retired in 1954. Backed by the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency, he had sought to maintain the strict Christian morality that had imbued the Production Code. He was replaced by the more flexible Geoffrey Shurlock. Breen's departure came as Hollywood was reassessing its position with declining audiences, the challenge of television and the loss of its control over exhibition.<sup>87</sup> It had succeeded in amending clauses in the Production Code on suicide (1951), miscegenation, liquor and profanity (1954) and in 1952 films were granted the protection of the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech.<sup>88</sup> In 1955 it began its rapprochement with television when it started to make programmes for the medium and sold the first batch of films to a television company.<sup>89</sup>

America in the mid-1950s was ready to explode. The *Brown* judgement had threatened the South's racial arrangements. Civil rights leaders were pressing for more change but, apart from the cautious NAACP, did not have effective political leadership to co-ordinate action. Southern racists, who killed the young African American, Emmett Till, were cleared of his murder and the University of Alabama expelled Autherine Lucey, the first African American to be enrolled there. Hollywood now returned to the delicate issue of slavery with the release of *Seven Angry Men* (1955), which retold John Brown's attempt to free the slaves in the late 1850s. While this again depicted him, as in *The Santa Fe Trail*, as a fanatical revolutionary, this time the opposition was shown to be equally violent in their support of slavery. With only six years to go before the centennial of the Civil War a new civil war seemed just over the horizon. In December 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and the Civil Rights Movement, unknowingly at the time, had found a cause and a leader in Martin Luther King, Jr.



<sup>1</sup> Lewis Allan and Earl Robinson, *'The House I Live In'* (1942).

<sup>2</sup> The HUAC was created in 1938 by the House of Representatives, to hold hearings on Fascist, Nazi, Communist, or other 'un-American' organisations. It became a standing committee in January 1945. It was not part of Senator McCarthy's inquisitions. During the 1960s it became discredited and was renamed the Internal Security Committee but was abolished in 1975.

<sup>3</sup> Mainly NAACP, whose membership grew from about 50,000 to 500,000 during the war.

<sup>4</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), x.

<sup>5</sup> This film, made under the auspices of the Office of War Information, was meant to counter Japanese portrayal of the war as 'a white man's war,' to mount an 'educational campaign' showing African Americans 'a real, legal and permanent chance for improvement under democracy' and to counter racist attitudes within the army. It was even directed by an African American, Carlton Moss. It was also used by teachers, social workers and liberal activists for 'inter-cultural education' and 'living together.' Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102-25.

<sup>6</sup> The anti-trust suit filed against the five major and three minor companies in July 1938 – the 'Paramount' case and the investigations by HUAC in 1940-1.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Philip L. Gianos, *Politics and Politicians in American Film* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), 116; Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 141.

<sup>9</sup> For example: *Sahara* (1943), *Bataan* (1943), *Crash Dive* (1943), *Lifeboat* (1944).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Cripps, *Hollywood's High Noon: Moviemaking and Society before Television* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 147; Robert Sklar, *Movie-made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994, first published 1975), 250.

<sup>11</sup> Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 226.

<sup>12</sup> Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 69-72.

<sup>13</sup> Its full name is the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Values.

<sup>14</sup> Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 188, 194; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 199, 203, 214-5.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Borstleman, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 46-7.

<sup>17</sup> Anti-Communism had never gone away. In 1940 the Smith Act outlawed any teaching or advocating the violent overthrow of the US government. HUAC made further investigations into Hollywood in 1940 and so did the Truman Committee in 1943. Following the Survey on Racial Conditions in the US in 1943 the FBI concluded that the Communist Party was the most subversive force in the country by stirring up agitation and unrest in the riots of that year.

<sup>18</sup> Such as the Federal Employee Loyalty Program (1947), the Taft-Hartley Act (1947) and the McCarran Act (1950).

<sup>19</sup> At his speech at Wheeling, West Virginia in 1950.

- <sup>20</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11-13, 88-9.
- <sup>21</sup> John Belton, 'American Cinema/American Culture' in Steven J. Ross, (ed.), *Movies and American Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 198; Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 182; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 260-66; Ernest Giglio, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film, and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000) 90.
- <sup>22</sup> John H. Lenihan, *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 33.
- <sup>23</sup> The major film companies had to sell off their theatres, which reduced their control over exhibition.
- <sup>24</sup> Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 285.
- <sup>25</sup> E. D. C. Campbell, *The Celluloid South* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee, 1981), 152-3; Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 190.
- <sup>26</sup> Ross Lockridge, Jr., wrote the book between 1941 and 1946. It was revised and partly serialised in *Life* magazine in 1947 before winning the MGM prize followed by a movie contract with Loews Incorporated. It was published in January 1948 with lavish reviews and became an instant best seller. Ross Lockridge, Jr., however committed suicide two months later, which may have contributed to the delay in bringing it to the screen.
- <sup>27</sup> James Street, *Tap Roots* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1952), 8.
- <sup>28</sup> The book does not completely accept total racial equality, as Quintus, the main African American male character, is only allowed to use a knife in the final battle and he is buried separately from all the whites – 'our menfolks [the Irish] and your menfolks and the secesh dead. They are all together. Cep'n the nigger. They buried him up the trench a piece.' Street, *Tap Roots*, 483.
- <sup>29</sup> In the book the Dabney's are overwhelmed and the few survivors have just enough left to restart their life.
- <sup>30</sup> Southern Democrats walked out of the Democratic Convention of 1948 when the Party had adopted a pro-civil rights platform. Strom Thurmond was then nominated by his fellow 'Dixiecrats' as a presidential candidate and stood on an avowedly segregationist platform. One of his campaign documents said that electing Harry Truman would mean 'anti-lynching and anti-segregation proposals will become the law of the land and our way of life in the South will be gone forever.'
- <sup>31</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights*, 32, 79-107; Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* 80-105; Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 208-9; Manning Marable: *The Second Reconstruction in Black America 1945-90* (New York: MacMillan, 1991).
- <sup>32</sup> Based on the 1937 novel *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* by MacKinlay Kantor.
- <sup>33</sup> *Variety*, 1 July, 1947; *Film Daily*, 2 July, 1947; *Los Angeles Times*, 23 August, 1947; *Independent*, 5 July 1947.
- <sup>34</sup> 'Noticed one thing. Communists supposed to be exploiting plight of Negroes in South nowadays. Well this is about Civil War issues and not a single in it, not even one in the background strummin' ol' banjo.' *New Yorker*, November, 1947.
- <sup>35</sup> *Hollywood Independent*, 5 July 1947.
- <sup>36</sup> MacKinlay Kantor, *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (New York: The Readers' League of America, 1937), 56.
- <sup>37</sup> From the book of the same name by Joe David Brown, published in 1946. The author adapted the story but is not credited with the script.

- <sup>38</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, 1 March, 1950; *New York Times*, 22 December, 1950. In 1944, near the town of Liberty, Mississippi, the Reverend Issac Simmons was lynched because he refused to sell his land, on which oil had been discovered, to a local white man.
- <sup>39</sup> Freedom Foundation award for 'outstanding contribution to a better understanding of freedom' (*Hollywood Reporter*, 22 February, 1951); Christian Herald plaque for Best Picture of the Year (*Los Angeles Times*, 15 January, 1951); official citation of merit by the National Conference of Christians and Jews for 'outstanding service in using motion picture medium for the furtherance of better human relations' (*Variety*, 21 August, 1951).
- <sup>40</sup> During World War II child-care centres were established to allow mothers to work to help the war effort. They were opposed by the Children's Bureau who saw that 'A mother's primary duty was to her home and children....no matter what the emergency.' Places were available for only about ten percent of eligible children. After the war the centres closed and pressure was put on women to return to being wives and mothers. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 15-6, 29.
- <sup>41</sup> In the book the soldier just has a 'cheery voice' and there is no obvious indication of Christianity except that he seemed 'to possess a magic wand' guiding Henry through 'the mazes of the tangled forest with a strange fortune' until he finds Henry's regiment. Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), 65-6.
- <sup>42</sup> However the Production Code Administrator, Joseph Breen, suggested in a letter to William Gordon, 11 April, 1947, that the minister's portrayal was too warlike and should be reviewed. (Production Code file on *Tap Roots*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).
- <sup>43</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 352.
- <sup>44</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 209.
- <sup>45</sup> *Hollywood Citizen News*, 18 August, 1950; *Daily News*, 18 September, 1950; *Hollywood Reporter*, 15 August, 1951 (PCA file at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).
- <sup>46</sup> This has been well documented by Mary L. Dudziak in *Cold War, Civil Rights*.
- <sup>47</sup> Marable: *The Second Reconstruction*, 21.
- <sup>48</sup> Dudziak *Cold War, Civil Rights*, 18- 28; Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 86.
- <sup>49</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* 106.
- <sup>50</sup> Truman's vetoes were over-ruled by Congress.
- <sup>51</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 211.
- <sup>52</sup> Kevern Verney, *Black Civil Rights in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 40.
- <sup>53</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, Published 1988), 88. Turner advanced his frontier theory in 1893 when the US Census of 1890 reported that it could no longer draw a frontier line on the map.
- <sup>54</sup> Jenni Calder, *There Must Be a Lone Ranger: The Myth and the Reality of the American Wild West* (London: Sphere Books, 1976), 1-3.
- <sup>55</sup> This is the Anglo-American belief that the US had a special mission to establish its political values and support its growing population by expanding its jurisdiction over the unsettled area west of the Mississippi. The term was first used about the annexation of Texas in 1845.

<sup>56</sup> Richard White, 'Western History' in Eric Foner, (ed.), *The New American History – Revised and Expanded Edition*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 203.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 3.

<sup>58</sup> Between 1946 and 1950 box office grosses fell 18%, studio profits 75% and exhibition profits by 70%. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 289 – 303.

<sup>59</sup> 'Any relationship between the white and black races' was forbidden. *The Motion Picture Production Code*, 1934, Section II.6, in Harold J Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 288.

<sup>60</sup> The number of indoor theatres declined between 1946 and 1950 from 18,719 to 16,904 whilst the drive-ins, mainly in the south, increased from 300 to 2202 and continued to increase until the 1960s when there were over 6,000. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 293.

<sup>61</sup> *Variety*, 20 April, 1955.

<sup>62</sup> Hollywood was beginning to portray Native Americans in a more sympathetic way – as in *Broken Arrow* (1950) – but this was the exception.

<sup>63</sup> William Clarke Quantrill (1837-65) joined the border ruffians who plagued 'bleeding' Kansas before the Civil War. During the war he formed a Confederate guerrilla band which included future outlaws such as Jesse James. He was commissioned a captain after capturing Independence, Missouri, in 1862 and later called himself a colonel. In 1863 he sacked the town of Lawrence, Kansas, killing 150 men and boys, most of whom were civilians, and then ambushed 100 Union troops killing 65 - mostly after they were captured – and mutilating their bodies. In May 1865, he was mortally wounded by Kentucky militia. It is not known for certain why he was there. Some claim that he was on his way to try to assassinate Lincoln. Thomas L. Purvis, *A Dictionary of American History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 332.

<sup>64</sup> There is a 1921 film *Jesse James, Under the Black Flag*.

<sup>65</sup> Established under the National Security Act (1947) the CIA was the successor to the Central Intelligence Group (1945) and the Office of Strategic Services (1942).

<sup>66</sup> They were residents of free-soil states who were in favour of the Confederacy leaving the Union. Their name comes from their use of copper pennies as a secret recognition symbol.

<sup>67</sup> In the actual raid, three banks were robbed but the town was not burned due to the resistance of the citizens. Only eleven of the raiders managed to return to Canada.

<sup>68</sup> Films such as *The Iron Curtain* (1948), *I Married a Communist* (1949), *I was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), *My Son John* (1952), *Pickup on South Street* (1953).

<sup>69</sup> There was some empathy for the Japanese among some African Americans during World War II as they wanted to see the whites suffer as due compensation for the treatment they themselves had received - although they did not want the Japanese to win. Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 190.

<sup>70</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*), 263-4.

<sup>71</sup> This film was a remake by John Ford of his own film – *Judge Priest* (1933) – based on stories by Irvin S. Cobb in *Old Judge Priest* and *Back Home* published 1911-16.

<sup>72</sup> *New York Times*, 17 March, 1954; *Variety*, 6 May, 1953; *Motion Picture Herald*, 9 May, 1953.

<sup>73</sup> Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, 4-5.

<sup>74</sup> *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938) ruled that segregation was not enforceable in a state unless educational facilities are equal; *Smith v. Allwright* (1944) ruled that private white primaries were



unconstitutional; *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) ruled that private covenants were legal but state courts could not enforce them.

<sup>75</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights*, 91-2.

<sup>76</sup> *Sweatt v. Painter*; *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*; *Henderson v. United States*; *Bolling v. Sharpe*; and *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce Chadwick claims that there was no 'radical departure from the deeply entrenched myths concerning the American nineteenth century' until 'the 1977 television miniseries *Roots*. Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 6-7.

<sup>78</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 204-5, 218.

<sup>79</sup> Allison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race During the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 20; John T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978), 96.

<sup>80</sup> Graham, *Framing the South*, 13-14.

<sup>81</sup> *Variety*, 12 November, 1947.

<sup>82</sup> Graham, *Framing the South*, 154.

<sup>83</sup> *Variety*, 2 July, 1947.

<sup>84</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 220.

<sup>85</sup> Dudziak *Cold War, Civil Rights*, 107.

<sup>86</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 154.

<sup>87</sup> The 'Paramount' case of 1948 forced the major studios to sell off their theatres.

<sup>88</sup> In the case of the *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio* the Supreme Court ruled that motion pictures were a business for profit and were not part of the press therefore the first amendment did not apply. This was overturned in *Burstyn v. Wilson* in 1952.

<sup>89</sup> Tino Balio, (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 30-1.



## Chapter 5

### RACE, FEAR AND MEMORY: HOLLYWOOD CONFRONTS THE CENTENNIAL: CIVIL WAR FILMS 1956-63

*'I have seen the promised land.'*<sup>1</sup>

The mid-1950s was the turning point in race relations, America's attitude to the Cold War and in Hollywood's battle with the Production Code Administration (PCA). Hollywood responded with a series of significant Civil War films exploring race and national identity. However, as the opposition in the South to conceding civil rights to African Americans increased, the number of Civil War films declined. Hollywood gave up the opportunity of exploiting the centennial celebrations and withdrew from portraying internal disunity on the screen when there was disunity on the streets. The celebrations became contested territory as African Americans and liberals fought the United States Civil War Centennial Commission (the Commission) for appropriate representation and for the historical memory of the Civil War. By the time of Kennedy's assassination, in November 1963, the Civil Rights Movement had forced the question of civil rights to the top of the domestic agenda and Civil War films were again in production and tackling the issues of race and national identity.

#### **Southern reaction to *Brown***

The Southern response to *Brown* was twofold: direct action and resurrecting the old fears and myths of the mixing of races. White 'Citizens Councils,' which mushroomed throughout the South to fight integration, were complemented by a rapid revival of the Ku Klux Klan and other reactionary groups, using their familiar tactics of intimidation, violence and murder. Almost all of the Southern Congressmen signed the 'Southern Manifesto' to use 'all lawful means' to overturn *Brown*.<sup>2</sup> Many states passed laws to close their public schools and to channel money into private education. Despite court orders, African Americans were prevented from registering to enter public schools. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was attacked in a co-ordinated legal offensive by the southern states and reduced to insignificance and impotence.<sup>3</sup> All opponents of this new southern resistance were labelled traitors and communists. As Governor Herman Talmadge wrote in 1955, 'If communists supported

integration, could there be any clearer sign of its immorality?’<sup>4</sup> Yet, if any area of America had the lowest number of communists, it was the South. Almost every southern state had established its own investigating committee after the 1950 McCarran Act.<sup>5</sup>

Underpinning southern reaction was the whole issue of race and southern identity. If *Brown* stood for the equal treatment of all citizens then the justification of white supremacy was gone. Civil Rights for African Americans threatened to end the Lost Cause myth – the South’s heritage, memory and loyalty to its traditions.<sup>6</sup> The fears and myths of miscegenation were resurrected to create emotional support against integration. White men had to defend the ‘inviolability’ of the southern white woman as the *Black Monday* tract proclaimed.<sup>7</sup> It was *The Birth of a Nation (Birth)* again, as an editorial in the *Jackson Daily News* pointed out: ‘White and Negro children in the same school will lead to miscegenation. Miscegenation leads to mixed marriages and mixed marriages lead to mongrelization of the human race.’<sup>8</sup> In 1955, twenty-nine states had statutes forbidding blacks and whites to marry.<sup>9</sup> Eisenhower was reported to have said, that opponents of integration ‘are not bad people. All they are concerned about is to see their sweet little girls are not required to sit in schools alongside some big black bucks.’ However if Southerners were forced to see African Americans as people then their whole way of life and Southern identity would have to change.<sup>10</sup> If Hollywood wanted to continue producing Civil War films it would have to take note of the political climate in the South.

### **Hollywood, race and national identity**

Hollywood, too, had been having its own battle over freedom. In 1952 the Supreme Court granted films the protection of the First Amendment - freedom of speech - and in 1953 *The Moon is Blue* was released without the PCA seal, but became a box office success. After the more liberal Geoffrey Shurlock replaced Joseph Breen the Production Code was completely revised. Miscegenation was no longer a taboo subject – the only ones that remained were those concerning nudity, sexual perversion and venereal disease.<sup>11</sup> With these liberalisations coming at the same time as the *Brown* judgement Hollywood was free to explore the issues - even in Civil War films.

Hollywood had long been interested in miscegenation and inter-racial romance, generally between whites and Native Americans or Spanish Americans, but, after *Birth*, had avoided

those between whites and African Americans. This was reinforced in the 1930 Production Code, which specifically forbade 'sex relationships between the white and black races.'<sup>12</sup> Not showing white and black sexual relations in Civil War films was not only a total denial of historical fact, but supported the southern myths about the need for racial purity.<sup>13</sup> To the southerner, miscegenation was the ultimate horror, and in the mid-1950s, when Hollywood was free to address the subject, it did so with care. The first major Civil War films to deal with inter-racial relationships looked at white and Native American relationships. Although in the early 1950s Hollywood had been identifying the Native Americans as the alien (communist) force and, by implication, surrogates for the African Americans, they did not pose the same visual and emotional threat.<sup>14</sup>

In *The Searchers* (1956)<sup>15</sup> Ethan Edwards is an unreconstructed Confederate with a hatred for the Native Americans. His search for his two nieces, abducted by Scar, a Comanche chief, is driven not only by hatred and revenge but by the fear that they will be sexually defiled. To him that was the worst that could happen to a white woman and she would be better dead. It is the resolution of this fear, helped by the part-Cherokee Indian, Martin, which informs the narrative. But Ethan is not alone - his race hatred is shared by other whites. Laurie, who is in love with Martin, is equally brutal. Hearing that Debbie, one of the nieces, is living with Scar she says, '(f)etch what home? The leavings of a Comanche buck sold time and time again to the highest bidder with savage brats of her own.....do you know what Ethan will do....he'll put a bullet in her brain – what we'd want him to do.'<sup>16</sup> Yet Laurie has no such feelings against Martin despite his heritage.

Martin is only one-eighth Cherokee but is continually reminded of this - 'I could mistake you for a half-breed' says Ethan. The screenplay was written in the midst of the South's reaction to *Brown*, therefore changing Martin's racial origins - in the book he is white - was consciously raising the issue of inter-racial relationships.<sup>17</sup> Martin becomes the film's moral conscience; he tries to protect Debbie from Ethan. He is also the mediator who gradually influences Ethan until the latter's internal struggle is resolved when, instead of killing Debbie, he takes her home.<sup>18</sup> Martin, the 'half-breed,' has won the argument. He returns to marry Laurie in an inter-racial union. He has been accepted into white society. He is the beneficiary of *Brown*. Martin and Laurie are the future of the country as Laurie's mother predicts that 'some day this country is going to be a fine good place to be – maybe it needs our bones in the ground before that time can come.' In other words America will

only accept racial harmony and equality once the present generation is dead. As for Ethan he is left outside the ranch house (the family - America) unable to enter the shared future of a multi-ethnic, mixed race America. He walks away as the southern 'scapegoat' taking the question of racial guilt with him.<sup>19</sup> Yet, while he cannot share that future, Ethan, the unreconstructed Confederate and racist, has begun to change. In the middle of the South's resistance to desegregation the film challenged equally hard-line southerners of the day to accept a multi-cultural society.

*Run of the Arrow* (1956)<sup>20</sup> is a more polemical film. Its director, Sam Fuller, saw the Civil War as having created a new kind of racism – a racism of hate - as the South shifted the responsibility for its defeat on to its former slaves and their descendants.<sup>21</sup> However, in the film, Fuller shows that race hatred is not confined to southerners as its main expression comes from a northerner. The central character, the embittered southerner O'Meara, apparently has no race hatred. He meets and falls in love with a Native American, Yellow Moccasin. In the marriage ceremony they 'mix blood' to seal their commitment, 'two bodies in one blood.' This act is the antithesis of the southern belief in racial purity as their children will be mixed-race – the symbol of the future. It is who you are not what race you are that is more important. O'Meara's hatred of the Yankees leads him to prefer inter-racial marriage to white unity, which shows up the illogical nature of racism. However, by using Native Americans instead of African Americans as the racial 'other,' the director, Sam Fuller has indirectly confronted the present day issue, giving it a *Broken Arrow* scenario.<sup>22</sup> The PCA was also cautious in the treatment of the relationship requesting that the 'lustfulness between O'Meara and Yellow Moccasin' be 'reduced.'<sup>23</sup> No reason was given but the PCA must have taken note of the comments and pronouncements of prominent southerner leaders on the subject of miscegenation. It also did not want filmmakers to take the removal of the ban on miscegenation as a signal to allow sexual licence on the screen.

O'Meara personifies the struggle of the South in coming to terms with a new concept of national identity. He rejects the Union and the changes that it brings: he rejects the South for its failure. He wants to change his identity and become a Sioux. But at the end of the film he is forced to confront his real identity. He finally realises that 'a man cannot live alone, he must have allegiance to a people, to a nation' – and his nation is America. O'Meara does not reach this conclusion by himself. He has been led there by Yellow Moccasin – a woman from another race, another culture. However much he has tried to



change, to forget what made him, he cannot. Instead of participating in the tribal rite of skinning the Indian-hating Union soldier Lieutenant Driscoll for violating the Sioux ritual of the 'run,' he shoots him out of compassion. He cannot become a Sioux. Yellow Moccasin hands him the captured American flag. 'Is your tribe in this flag?' she asks. O'Meara eventually agrees. As he takes his inter-racial family back to the new America the narrator concludes that, 'Lee's surrender was not the death of the South – it was the birth of the United States.' The film ends with the challenge to America: 'The end of the story can only be written by you.' O'Meara returns to a new country where skin colour is not a bar to full and equal citizenship. The South in 1956 also had to make that difficult journey.

National identity was challenged by the sudden re-introduction of African Americans into Civil War films. This was no coincidence following the *Brown* judgement. Although *Friendly Persuasion* (1956) ostensibly dealt with the moral problem that pacifists like the Quakers in the film faced, when confronted with direct threats against their homes and families, it also touched on national identity. Enoch is a runaway slave, who lives on the Birdwell farm. His introduction is a deliberate change from the book where he is only called the 'hired hand.'<sup>24</sup> The author, Jessamyn West, helped on the final script and acted as adviser to the filming and therefore must have agreed to the change and its implications. Although the Birdwell family treats Enoch as an equal, the opportunity to open up a significant debate on slavery and civil rights was lost in Hollywood's caution and stereotyping. There is only one short scene where he talks briefly about his family, otherwise he rarely appears. When he is seen, it is mainly to look after the horses and he becomes the 'servant' once again. However when the community is under threat from Morgan's Raiders,<sup>25</sup> Enoch asks for, and is given, a gun, but he is not shown at the battle scene. Once again the African American is denied the recognition of fighting for his freedom. Yet the last image is of Enoch, dressed in his Sunday best, riding off to the Quaker Meeting House - integrated and accepted.

*Friendly Persuasion* was variously praised as a 'drama rich in human values,' a 'fictionalised but believable Americana,' a film that is 'gentle, humorous and poignant,' and 'rarely has there been a more realistic or true-to-life story on the screen.' With these comments, and the film's romantic nostalgia for a golden age of rural simplicity and ideal American family life, it is little wonder that most commentators were taken in by its



superficial charm and the moral dilemma faced by the white Quakers. However the *Los Angeles Times* saw its 'timelessness' in the context of a 'world on the brink of new conflicts.'<sup>26</sup> This was the time of the Hungarian uprising and the Suez crisis which brought the two major world powers into confrontation and demonstrated once again how close the Cold War was to disrupting peace - as Mosby's Marauders were to the Birdwell family. Josh, the eldest son, after a struggle with his conscience, sets aside his pacifist beliefs to help to defend the community. When his horse returns alone his father sets out, gun in hand, to find him. Any threat to the American way of life ultimately had to be met. Every citizen, whatever their beliefs, would rally to America's defence. *Friendly Persuasion* is a good example of the intertwining of Cold War and civil rights.

The next year saw miscegenation explored for the first time in a Civil War film within a black/white romantic context. In *Band of Angels* (1957),<sup>27</sup> Amantha only learns that she is the daughter of a mixed-race union on the death of her father. She therefore becomes part of the estate and is taken to New Orleans to be sold as a slave. Amantha refuses to accept her new status. 'Nobody's going to keep me from being free' she tells the slave dealer. She is called a 'flower of Kentucky' by the auctioneer, who knows 'for a fact that she has coloured blood but it couldn't be more than a miser's dram' – yet Amantha's mother was African American. Hamish Bond, a wealthy plantation owner, who made his money from illegal slave trading, buys Amantha at the slave auction. She replaces his previous Creole mistress, Michelle, who remains as the housekeeper. Bond seems to have had mainly inter-racial relationships and in the film is never seen with a white woman. There is also the hint that he is the father of his 'boss Negro' Rau-Ru, whom he rescued as a baby in Africa when Rau-Ru's mother, 'a woman I used to know,' is killed. The PCA was far more concerned with the sex scenes in this film than in *Run of the Arrow*, although the sex is implied rather than shown, and seemed to indicate that this was because of the black/white relationship. It also takes place in the heart of the South during the Civil War and not in the west after the Civil War, as in *Run of the Arrow*. There is an 'unacceptable treatment of illicit sex,' wrote Geoffrey Shurlock 'resulting in a woman, a slave, getting her freedom,' staying on as Bond's mistress and then 'sailing off' with him 'at the end.' It is treated 'romantically,' there are no 'compensating moral values.'<sup>28</sup> They were there, but giving slaves freedom was apparently not recognised as a moral value. The *Hollywood Reporter* echoed these sentiments and pointed to the double racial standards when it

reported that the film had ‘already stirred up some excitement and controversy because of the love story – a white man and a part-Negro girl.’<sup>29</sup>

*Band of Angels* did challenge the current tensions in race relations through the male African American lead Rau-Ru, the self-assured, articulate and ‘adopted’ son of Hamish Bond. He understands what freedom means – control over one’s own life – otherwise it is ‘a white word’ defined for other races by whites. To Rau-Ru, Bond’s attitude to keeping slaves and treating them with ‘kindness’ is ‘worse than rawhide. When a man uses a whip you learn what there is to fight against. But this kindness – it’s a trap that can hold you in bondage forever.’ Rau-Ru explodes the myth of the benevolent plantation, of the attitude that African Americans can never be the equal of white Americans, that a compliant expression does not imply contentment with slavery – just accommodation until freedom can be achieved. All this comes out with passion and anger while African Americans are still seething over the killing of Emmett Till and are celebrating their success of the Montgomery bus boycott. Strong though this discussion is, its impact is lessened by Hollywood’s caution and compromise, which replaced the complexities and hard realities of the book with romance and an apologia for the South. The illegal slave trade is carried out by Northerners, like Bond, and African chiefs; a former lover of Amantha, a northerner and abolitionist, attempts to blackmail and seduce her; the Union General Butler is accused of ‘confiscating’ the slaves to work on ‘carpetbagging plantations where the Yankees will use the whip and pay no wages’; only one of the plantations that are mentioned, run by a planter of French origin, uses harsh treatment, where every slave is ‘scarred by the whip’; and at the end Rau-Ru is reconciled to Bond and helps him and Amantha to escape. The last scene is of the lonely Rau-Ru waving them goodbye, the loyal servant having helped his master one more time – an echo of Griffith’s *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911).<sup>30</sup>

A different perspective on miscegenation – one that went to the heart of the South’s racial fears - is presented in *Raintree County* (1957). Where Amantha became stronger in her determination to overcome her new black status, the southern belle Susanna, in *Raintree*, is haunted by the fear that she might have ‘one drop’ of ‘Nigro blood.’ This, she declares to her new northern husband, makes ‘a person all Nigro.’ It is worse than ‘being an Abolitionist.’ This fear of the mulatto echoes *Birth* where the ‘villains,’ Stoneman’s housekeeper/mistress and Silas Lynch, are both mulattos. The South can deal with the issue of abolition (desegregation) in the mid-1950s, but mixing blood through inter-racial

relationships is racial suicide and the end of white supremacy. Once again the double standards of southern society are exposed. Susanna's father had a black mistress – 'a lady of colour' – although only after her mother 'went insane.' And it did not bother Susanna's cousins to frequent bordellos, which were full of African American and mulatto women. But to a southern white woman, even contemplating the possibility can drive her into madness – as it does to Susanna. The final irony is that it is all in her mind – just as the fears surrounding miscegenation are built on irrational prejudice.

Hollywood adopted its usual caution in exploring the South's racial attitudes in the film. In the book, Ross Lockridge, Jr., made his position clear about his dislike for the South and for slavery. 'The secret of this culture,' he writes, 'white and proud, was that it had all been built over the stinking marsh of human slavery.'<sup>31</sup> The film, however, continually downplays the issue. The hero, John Wickliff Shawnessy, an abolitionist, marries Susanna, the Southern belle, who has come North with her two African American servants. They honeymoon in the South where John meets Susanna's family and where he can see and confront slavery. At a plantation ball John is asked what he thinks of the South and he replies that he thinks 'so highly of it that I'm worried about all this talk of secession.' He is told that the North should secede, as they are the ones threatening to break the Union. John should stay in the South and help build 'a Greek Republic on the soil of America' with 'pillared houses' in which would dwell 'the most beautiful women.' Like Greece, of course, the Republic would be built on slavery. When John is challenged on the 'wage slavery' of the North he can only reply that he 'doesn't like misery anywhere – North or South.' The discussion then ends and so the opportunity for a full examination of the arguments about slavery is lost. The South is presented as victim. It is the North that is provoking conflict, threatening to destroy a cultured civilisation and interfering in issues that are the preserve of the states. Similarly, O'Meara in *Run of the Arrow* had argued that it was the North that caused the conflict and the South merely reacted to provocation. He then puts forward an extreme states rights position that 'we don't like it (the federal government) making up laws...we never liked it.' Given the South's response to Brown, perhaps this is as far as Hollywood dared to go at the time.

Another example of how the film softens criticism of the South comes when John and Susanna return north. John makes no comment on the continuing status of Susanna's two maids until he is accused of hypocrisy for tolerating slavery in his own home while

campaigning for Lincoln. John's reaction is personal not principled: it is his honour and reputation that is at stake not the principles of freedom and civil rights. 'I just don't want slaves in my house,' he tells Susanna. This is the North closing its eyes to slavery - it is a southern problem. Susanna reluctantly decides to free them and does so publicly at the party held to celebrate Lincoln's election. One of the guests comments sarcastically that now 'we're all sisters under the skin' while another blacks his face and prances about in a white caricature of a slave dance. The situation is set up again for a denunciation of slavery, but instead, John goes upstairs to comfort his wife, who has fled the racist taunts.

*Raintree County* had been resurrected in 1953 by Dore Schary, a producer who had been associated with the liberal-conscience films of the 1940s.<sup>32</sup> He hoped that it could serve the present day cause of the Negro, since the lead male character was an abolitionist.<sup>33</sup> However he was forced out of MGM in 1956 and therefore was not responsible for the final product. Nevertheless, a strong anti-slavery anti-South approach would not have been well received in the South. One reviewer considered the issues that it raised 'more pertinent today than...ten years ago' and wondered whether its pro-North presentation - 'a comparatively rare point of view in pictures' - would 'alienate Southern audiences.' He felt that the treatment was 'temperate and reasonable.'<sup>34</sup> In a rare comment on racial matters, the PCA raised concerns over one scene that 'may prove offensive to your audiences in this country, particularly since this gross mockery of the Negroes goes unchallenged' - although it acknowledged that the scene did not violate the Code.<sup>35</sup> Hollywood was showing itself sensitive to both the civil rights issues and the needs of the industry.

As part of the Civil War genre *Raintree County* was different. It was strong on reconciliation, but this comes early on with the marriage of John and Susanna. John is seduced by the superficial beauty of Susanna who represents the very different and exotic nature of the South - something that had fascinated northerners for a long time.<sup>36</sup> Something that 'to us Yankees,' says John, 'is not too easy to understand.' Like the South, Susanna's dark secret is the darkness of slavery, the darkness that twists logic to allow white men to have relationships with black women but crucifies black men and rejects white women if the reverse were to occur. Susanna's false premise - and the source of her psychological trauma that deepens as the film progresses - that she is the product of miscegenation, is the false premise of white supremacy. She is the uncomprehending voice



of the South asking John, '(w)hat's anyone in the South do to hurt you?' The South is innocent of any accusations levelled by abolitionists. They have their life style and do not interfere in the North. All they want is the status quo to continue. But the history of the marriage is the history of America, two sections joined together with mutual needs but also with irreconcilable incompatibilities. The war tears them apart. 'Things can't get any better between us...it's nobody's fault but it's such a pity,' says Susanna at the birth of their child just as the Civil War begins. Their child is the hope of the future, North and South combined, but it is born to white North and white South. At the end of the film Susanna recognises that 'our foundations are too rickety....it just would not work.' She is the Old South unable to enter the New South. So just as the Old South dies as victim and martyr so Susanna commits suicide – an act that the PCA condemned as 'glorification' <sup>37</sup> – leaving John free to marry his childhood sweetheart. 'A man should not only marry his beloved,' says John's father, 'he should marry his region.' This is an ambiguous statement given the abolitionist position of the film. Is it a plea for non-interference and for understanding the other point of view? It appears to question why the war was fought at all. North and South are so different that they should be left alone to work out their own futures. Any attempt to alter the status quo will only end in tragedy. John is more realistic, but also treads the reconciliationist path when he replies to his former Copperhead friend, who now wants to make the South suffer, that the South is 'no longer rebellious, it's beaten, it's bleeding.' In 1957 it was rebellious, but it was neither beaten nor bleeding.

*Raintree County* opened in Louisville, Kentucky, in early October 1957, with a build up and premiere that out-rivalled *Gone with the Wind* (GWTW).<sup>38</sup> It was the month after the Little Rock crisis when African American children's attempt to enrol at school created a confrontation between the state of Arkansas and the federal government. Most reviewers were far more concerned with the stars, the story, production, spectacle and cost than with the contemporary events it mirrored. There were one or two mentions of slavery and miscegenation but nothing on civil rights. However the *Motion Picture Daily* did comment that '(t)he origins of our national racial consciousness....is given pointed reference in the script which assumes significance in the light of today's newspaper headlines.'<sup>39</sup> The headlines concerned not only the continuing problems of civil rights in Little Rock but the launch of Sputnik. The *Daily* was linking the Cold War firmly with racial upheaval and civil rights. However, despite its initial success as it was rolled out in a series of glittering premieres, the film flagged at the box-office. This was the last film that addressed



black/white relationships, in Civil War films for some years, although Hollywood felt confident enough to produce inter-racial films in other settings with the 'tragic mulatto' played by white actresses trying to pass as white – and failing.<sup>40</sup> Failure meant exclusion from being accepted as part of the nation and the nation was not yet ready to accept the African American. Once again the Civil War demonstrated its unique position in popular culture.

There were two further Civil War films in 1957 that featured African Americans. In *The Guns of Fort Petticoat*, Hetty is a 'dignified Negro maid' who is besieged with southern women and children by Native Americans in an abandoned church.<sup>41</sup> Hetty is dutiful and helpful and is treated as an equal by the women. She is an area of calm while other white women are becoming distressed. In *The True Story of Jesse James*, two African American musicians, one of whom is blind, wander through the narrative to provide a linking thread. Although their presence is not germane to the main narrative it provides a symbolic counter-narrative for they survive while the ex-Confederate, Jesse James, does not. After 1957 there were only two other films until 1964 in which African Americans appear – *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) and *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1961). As Hollywood reduced its production of Civil War films it also reduced the number of African American roles just as the major events in the struggle for civil rights and those of the centennial celebrations were taking place.

If Hollywood was taking a cautious approach to inter-racial relationships and civil rights for African Americans in its Civil War films, it continued the change in the representation of the white North and the white South. By 1960 the totally pro-South/anti-North film had ended with a much more balanced view being shown. The pejorative epithet 'carpetbagger' was abandoned – the last occasion it was used was in *The True Story of Jesse James*. Southern characters no longer suggested that the war should be forgotten and the new southern hero disappeared. In their place were the southern villain and the new northern hero. However reconciliation still remained the dominant message. These changes in representation were picked up by reviewers, who began to make more liberal and anti-racist comments after 1956 – see Appendix 4, Production Code Administration Files.

One of the last southern hero films is *The Proud Rebel* (1958), a post-war film, in which the Confederate, John Chandler, is determined to avoid any trouble. However, he is

provoked into a fight and has to admit in court that he 'struck the first blow' – albeit under provocation. This is the argument that the North brought against the South that they fired the first shot, and the South that they were provoked into war. Chandler's fine is paid by a northern farmer, Linette Moore, and he goes to work for her. But the sheep farmers who provoked the fight want her land and Chandler and Moore combine to defend it. Yet again the Cold War message that a united America will succeed, and unity is cemented and the future ensured in Hollywood's traditional Civil War ending - North-South reconciliation through marriage. A different twist to the southern hero comes in *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958) which distinguishes the good from the bad southerner. Here the Confederate captain who has come to give Quantrill orders to carry out a raid is so shocked by his attitude that he warns the townspeople and the soldiers and joins them to defend the town of Lawrence. The film ends with North/South reconciliation through marriage and gives positive images of the Union army and the federal government.

The rehabilitation of the northerner can be seen in *Great Day in the Morning* (1956) where the Union captain is contrasted to the northern profiteer. As in *Quantrill's Raiders* the distinction is being made between good and bad northerners – and continues the trend in altering Hollywood's image of the Union soldier in Civil War films. In *Drango*, (1957) a Union major returns to the south as a military governor wanting to make amends for the destruction that the war caused. He has to struggle against malignant hatred and plots by die-hard southerners, but succeeds through his compassion and desire for justice. In *Westbound* (1959) a Union captain is sent to the west to stop Confederate guerrilla raids on gold shipments. He finds that while the townspeople have southern sympathies they dislike their most prominent citizen who has achieved power through illegal means and is also the organiser of the guerrilla raids. After a series of atrocities they combine with the captain to restore law and order.

In the mid-1950s national identity remained white and male and Hollywood, through its portrayal of the individual in the mythical west, promoted this concept. But society was changing. World War II had opened up national identity to previously excluded groups such as the Jews, the Irish and most of the Europeans. However, when the Supreme Court declared that discrimination was unconstitutional, southern conservatives saw this as a threat to their identity as it implied equality with the African Americans. If Jim Crow was to fall, so would their myths and the justification for the southern way of life. With Senator

McCarthy discredited and a more relaxed Production Code, Hollywood was ready to join the debate and challenge existing notions of national identity. The endings of films such as *Run of the Arrow*, *The Searchers* and *Band of Angels* indicated clearly that the future was multi-cultural.

*Raintree County* was the last film for a decade that attempted to examine the issues of the Civil War, although there were references in other films to Hollywood's change in attitude. A Southerner admits in *Great Day in the Morning* (1956) that 'we got bad ones at home too,' and in *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958) there is the only mention in all these films of the underground railway. Apart from the maid and the groups of African Americans who observe what is going on in *The Horse Soldiers*, they are rarely seen again until 1964.<sup>42</sup> As Southern reaction to the Civil Rights Movement increased, so Hollywood returned to its more familiar Civil War of southern and northern whites working towards reconciliation and trust in the future. They come together to fight the forces of disruption – the Native Americans and Mexicans - in *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (1957), the southern guerrilla leader Quantrill in *Quantrill's Raiders* and greedy Northern farmers in *The Proud Rebel* (1958). Hollywood was coming into line with the underlying theme of the Civil War centennial celebrations – unity.

### **The Centennial: an opportunity avoided, a memory won**

To understand the significance of the centennial it is necessary to return to the events and environment of the fiftieth anniversary. The semi-centennial celebrations took place on a wave of patriotic fervour and national unity underpinned by America's growing economic and political strength in the world and its renewed imperial ambitions following the closure of the frontier. To whites, the celebrations were a time of national reconciliation and unity based on the valour of the past and reunion in the present. The causes and consequences of the war were set aside. 'We've got beyond the time,' said President Taft to a gathering of Confederate veterans in 1909, 'when we discuss the war.....what Americans did then we all cherish as a common heritage.'<sup>43</sup> Woodrow Wilson, the first Southern president since the Civil War, echoed those sentiments when he came to give the final oration at Gettysburg in July 1913 flanked by the United States and the Confederate flags. Like other speakers he made no mention of slavery or race relations, the causes or the results. It had been a 'brothers' war, he said, the 'battles [were] long past, the quarrel forgotten.' Only the

‘valour [and] manly devotion of the men’ should be remembered. When Wilson returned to Washington he began to segregate government offices and facilities. During that year over seventy African Americans were lynched.<sup>44</sup>

This attitude towards the African Americans could be justified by the ‘scientific’ theories of white, especially Anglo-Saxon, racial superiority. African Americans largely accepted Booker T. Washington’s view that racial reconciliation and advancement could only come by accepting some degree of racial division and through accommodation with the prevailing structures.<sup>45</sup> When it came to celebrating the semi-centennial there was no clamour for inclusion. National and local celebrations were separate. This was nothing new. African Americans had begun celebrating Emancipation Day (January 1) even before the Civil War had ended and, from the 1880s held regular exhibitions that showed the ‘progress’ of the race.<sup>46</sup> During the celebrations a number of states, cities and small towns in the north and the south gave financial support for segregated African American events. So confident were southern whites that most of them supported a congressional grant in 1914 for an exposition in Richmond as a way of honouring the ‘loyalty’ of their former slaves during the war. The previous year, the most elaborate African American commemoration, the ‘National Emancipation Exposition,’ had been held in New York with great success.<sup>47</sup> Hollywood joined in the celebrations by providing films that were in tune with the times. In 1911 the Civil War was also very good for business.

Fifty years later the arrangements for the centennial had a familiar ring. Congress, in 1957, looked forward to celebrating the unity of the nation forged by the ‘greatest internal crisis’ and the ‘supreme experience’ in America’s history. The language used and the sentiments it implied – focusing only upon the war - could have been written fifty years earlier. There was no mention of emancipation but a bold statement that, ‘the sons of both North and South have subsequently fought side by side for human freedom, justice, and the dignity of the individual among people everywhere.’<sup>48</sup> The irony that many citizens in their own country were denied these very things was entirely overlooked. Positioning America in the Cold War context was far more important.

The semi-centennial was resurrected when the last surviving Civil War veteran, Walter Williams, died in December 1959. President Eisenhower issued a statement on the War Between the States – not the Civil War – observing that the ‘wounds of the deep and bitter



dispute which once divided our nation have long since healed..... the chief actors in that great and tragic drama.....have all passed....No longer are they the Blue and Gray. All rest together as Americans in honored glory.'<sup>49</sup> This was Gettysburg, 1913, revisited. Race relations, to the establishment, had not moved on. As fifty years previously, freeing four million slaves was incidental and not worth consideration.

The establishment of the Centennial Commission only served to underline this approach. All its members were white and professional. Its racialised nature, and pro-southern leaning, was soon shown when, in February 1958, it agreed to exercise great caution in the selection of African Americans as advisory members.<sup>50</sup> The first African American was not appointed as an advisor until September 1961.<sup>51</sup> The Cold War, too, was very much in mind with the appointment of Major-General Ulysses S. Grant III - a right wing anti-communist as chairman.<sup>52</sup> The Commission's aim was not to foster regionalism or disunity but to reinforce loyalty to the nation threatened from without and within.<sup>53</sup> The theme of the celebrations was unity – as it had been in 1911. Then the Progressives felt that the nation was threatened internally by different, and alien, cultural attitudes and by subversive left-wing ideology. They wanted to re-affirm unity as American unity and re-establish national identity along racial lines. In 1961 the Cold War apparently threatened America externally through potential military conflict with the Soviet Union and internally by communist subversion. The unity of the country was essential to meet this challenge. The centennial therefore became a mechanism to reinforce patriotism and unity and to demonstrate to the world how America's past determined its resolve for the future: America was not a divided nation. But it was – as it had been in 1911. This time, however, African Americans were openly challenging discrimination and the status quo with demands for equality. African Americans had demonstrated their patriotism, unity and commitment to America in World War II: unity for them now meant the unity of inclusion - not the unity to fight an external threat.

Hollywood was faced with a dilemma. While the national theme was to promote unity, the country, and especially the south, was moving in a different direction. The 1954 *Brown* judgement had given a huge boost to the Civil Rights Movement whilst the year-long campaign (1955-6) over integrated transport in Montgomery, Alabama, had shown the power of organised non-violent direct action. Victory had given African Americans a greater belief in their own abilities to overturn Jim Crow, regardless of the taunt of



communism thrown at them. It had also produced a new and charismatic leader in Martin Luther King, Jr. and an organisation – the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) – which could give a degree of co-ordination and moral authority to the cause. However, the white South had responded to the desegregation judgement with increasing hostility and intransigence. Well before the centennial, the symbol of the Confederacy - the ‘Stars and Bars’ – had made a reappearance and was flying on public buildings across the south. State governors and school boards were confronting attempts at school integration with creative legal arrangements, using police and state troopers and encouraging civilian violence. Even Eisenhower was forced to intervene at Little Rock in September 1957 – just before the premier of the much-hyped *Raintree County*. The historian, C. Van Woodward, observing white resistance in 1958, saw, in the approaching centennial, another sectional crisis reminiscent of the previous one.<sup>54</sup> Whilst there might be a political consensus over anti-communism and the Cold War, there was bitter and violent confrontation over the issue of civil rights.

Civil War films are about conflict between the ‘sections’ and this would pose problems for Hollywood in presenting a story that would not only be acceptable to the audience but would also be profitable. Hollywood would not want the spectacle of the Civil War on the screen to be duplicated outside the theatres. Already many southern theatres were being picketed to abolish segregated seating.<sup>55</sup> Hollywood was also looking over its financial shoulder as television was attracting the young, increasingly the main stay of cinema audiences, with prime time western series,<sup>56</sup> while its own post-war mainstay of the Civil War film, the western, was declining in popularity.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the major Civil War films of the mid-1950s, which had taken a more liberal and pro-Northern view, had not done well at the box office and there was no Civil War novel that was as strong as *GWTW* to provide the basis for an epic fit for the centennial.<sup>58</sup>

Yet the centennial was a golden opportunity to cash in on American patriotism, as Hollywood had done fifty years earlier, and to celebrate the event that was increasingly seen as making America a nation.<sup>59</sup> There were after all similarities with the semi-centennial. America continued to be an imperial power. The nation had come together to resist the subversive nature of communism at home as it had previously come together against the potential radicalism and alien cultures of the new immigrants. The American flag had become an even firmer symbol of patriotism. Jim Crow, whilst under some

pressure, continued to hold. The memory of the Civil War had come to be one of unity, consensus and harmony, honouring the dead of both sides for their heroism and faith in their beliefs, and not division and disunity.

Hollywood had a number of options. A pro-South film would mean a return to the plantation with loyal slaves and the Lost Cause myth – something that Rau-Ru in *Band of Angels* had shown was a fiction. However, such films would also have to stand against the current portrayal of the ‘decadent South’ as Hollywood transferred Tennessee Williams to the screen. In his plays men and women are far removed from the aristocratic planter and the beautiful and supportive Southern belle: the Old South myths were no longer relevant, they had lost their southernness.<sup>60</sup> A pro-North film could either concentrate on the conflict and avoid the slavery issue, which would have drawn protests from African Americans and liberals, or it could take a more realistic view of slavery and would probably have been boycotted in the South.

A third way was exemplified by the film *The Horse Soldiers* (1959), which presented a more balanced approach. Both sides were seen to be firm in their ideals, to act honourably and heroically; the slaves were treated with southern paternalism and northern compassion; and the film ended with reconciliation and future unity.<sup>61</sup> The Commission welcomed the film as one that fitted its national programme to pay ‘tribute to the memories of our forefathers who took part in the bitter conflict to determine the exact path our national government should follow’ and would ‘provide Americans with a new understanding of the way in which we built from sacrifice and suffering an enduring nation and a lasting peace.’<sup>62</sup> Reviewers also liked the film. ‘It is in the centennial mood,’ wrote Bosley Crowther, it is ‘reflective of the curious gallantry of that tragic war.’ *Variety* agreed. ‘This is the kind of Civil War that audiences imagine’ capturing the ‘senseless slaughter’ and the ‘tragedy of the fratricidal conflict between the states.’<sup>63</sup> This could have been the way forward but the film failed to satisfy the public despite its ‘bending backwards to do justice to both sides.’<sup>64</sup>

Balance in a film may be less appealing than the usual single perspective of events that Hollywood and genre normally provide. The treatment of the African Americans in *The Horse Soldiers* ranges from the Lost Cause myth, that if they are treated fairly whilst still in their slave/servant status, they will support the South’s cause, to the symbol of a multi-

cultural future as a northern military doctor delivers an African American baby. When reprimanded, because he had not attended to the injured Union troops, he replies that 'one's dead, one's going, one's born – an amazing process isn't it.' In other words the future is with the living – whatever race they may be. However, although this is April 1863, there is no mention in the film of emancipation or of African Americans becoming soldiers or any indication that the African Americans have the ability or determination to help themselves to freedom. Except for Lukey, the plantation owner's maid, they are shown as bystanders humbly waiting for the war to end. It all rests on white men's courage and idealism. Lukey, in the faithful slave role, is complicit in all the stratagems that her mistress tries, in order to frustrate the Union mission, and rejects any possibility of gaining her freedom. She does not want to be considered as 'contraband.' In keeping with the tone of white reconciliation, it is Lukey, not Hannah, her mistress, who gets killed and it is Hannah who, at the end of the film, can look forward to the future.

Hannah takes on the role of the South. She is fiercely committed to the southern cause and will do anything to make it succeed. She questions the Union soldiers' principles about 'saving the Union,' calling them 'plundering pirates' who will be 'cut to pieces' when the Confederates catch up with them. However when her attempt to escape fails she is forced to give her 'word of honour' not to try to do it again. The brave and valorous southern approach to war is further celebrated in a 'Pickett's charge' against a well-defended Union position and the attempt by young cadets to halt the Union retreat. At the end, the Confederate general offers his medical staff to help the Union wounded, which mirrored the earlier medical help given to the Confederate wounded. It was indeed a film fit for the centennial, as conceived by the Commission, with bravery, honour, respect and reconciliation between the two white sides.

Hollywood took a fourth way: it severely reduced its interest in, and production of, Civil War films. From 1958 –1963 inclusive, it produced an eclectic list of twelve, barely memorable, films - compared to the average of seven films each year throughout the 1950s. The cycle had not ended because America was at war, but mainly because of the threat that America would be divided at home and divided by the very issue left over from the Civil War – the civil rights of African Americans. This was 1961 not 1911. African Americans were willing to challenge segregation openly and not just through the courts. The lunch counter sit-ins,<sup>65</sup> the Freedom Rides,<sup>66</sup> the marches demanding an end to

discrimination, attempts at university and school enrolments and the voter registration campaigns were dramatic assertions of African American activism. They were prepared to brave police brutality and mob violence to win their rights. If Hollywood decided to make Civil War films it would have to compete with the real civil confrontation in the south. However, its decision not to participate meant that the racial issues at the heart of the Civil War conflict would not be discussed through a major cultural medium.

It was not only on the streets that African Americans challenged the established order – the centennial arrangements were contested from the beginning. If the theme of the centennial was to be unity, it appeared that that was still the white unity of fifty years before. The NAACP had sought, in January 1960, for ‘adequate and integrated presentation of the Negro throughout the observance.’ The opening events, however, showed that this had fallen on deaf ears. These included a week-long commemoration of the founding of the Confederacy, a huge centennial ball in Atlanta with a showing of *GWTW*, re-enactments of the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the first Battle of Bull Run, won by the South, and mainly attended by Southerners. Civil Rights activists saw this as no more than perpetuating the Confederate myth, as well as a boost to southern resistance against desegregation.<sup>67</sup>

The insensitivity and unspoken racism of the Commission encouraged protest. Its 1961 annual meeting was to be held in the segregated city of Charleston. The New Jersey delegation contained one African American. She was refused accommodation in the hotel with the rest of her delegation. The Commission refused to act. Finally Kennedy intervened with the offer of the naval base outside Charleston, which was accepted as a satisfactory compromise. The Commission was faced with another boycott when it drew up an all-white list of speakers for the ceremony to commemorate the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This anniversary had been the subject of a campaign by the NAACP and by the SCLC and supporting white organisations to highlight the unfinished business of the Civil War. The Commission was forced into reorganising the event to make it more racially integrated, but the new arrangements had all the hallmarks of tokenism.<sup>68</sup>

In 1911 Hollywood followed the positive lead of Congress, the White House and popular culture in emphasising unity and reconciliation. In 1961 the same principles were flawed and contested from the beginning. Even a film like *The Horse Soldiers*, which stressed



unity and benefited from the Cold War tension and starred John Wayne, soon flagged at the box office.<sup>69</sup> When Hollywood looked to Washington for a lead it found ambiguity. Despite his massive endorsement by African American voters, Kennedy's main concern was the Cold War, which was why he expressed deep annoyance at the Freedom Rides campaign. He saw this as an attempt to create a crisis and obtain overseas sympathy and support at a very difficult time in Soviet-American relationships.<sup>70</sup> Although Kennedy had a majority in Congress he still had to rely on the white southerners, who controlled the key committees.<sup>71</sup> The administration was sensitive to being accused of limiting states' rights if it intervened too often in the civil rights protests and Kennedy did not want to split the Democratic Party by introducing major civil rights legislation. He preferred to rely on executive action, federal court decisions and litigation by the Justice Department.<sup>72</sup> Unlike President Wilson he did not attend centennial ceremonies.<sup>73</sup> He sent his brother to the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation ceremony with a message that accepted that much needed to be done to 'make equal rights a reality for all of our people, to fulfil finally the promises of the Declaration of Independence.'<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, it was the events in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, that convinced him that legislation was needed. It was, he finally admitted, 'a moral issue,' but it was dictated as much by America's image abroad as it was by internal events.<sup>75</sup> By that time even ordinary Americans had come to recognise the harm race relations was doing to America as they watched their television news and read reports of violence against civil rights workers and demonstrators in their newspapers. In December 1962 only 4% believed that 'racial problems' were the country's biggest challenge.<sup>76</sup> In June 1963, 78% agreed that race discrimination harmed the nation abroad.<sup>77</sup>

The linking of Cold War and civil rights continued in the handful of centennial films. In *The Deadly Companions* (1961), the former Confederate, Turk, wants to create his own slave republic with the proceeds of his robberies – a republic where he, and his friends, would be above the law. Once again the threat of secession is raised, and ridiculed. All Turk has is gold. He is one of Alison Graham's unschooled 'redneck' characters and could only 'rule' by a dictatorship of violence and enslavement. Once again there is the implied reference to the authoritarian Soviet Union posing a direct challenge to American democracy. Turk is prevented from carrying out his plan by the democratic forces of law and order.

When the narrator introduces the Civil War section in *How the West Was Won* (1962), he



talks about Lincoln pleading that ‘the free *West* (emphasis added) should be allowed to remain free and warns of the hazards of a house divided against itself.’<sup>78</sup> This call for freedom and unity paralleled the times. The film opened at the end of 1962 following the Cuban missile crisis in which Kennedy led a united nation ready to defend itself at the same time as the internal conflict over civil rights was creating disunity. The following year *Advance to the Rear* suggested that, negotiated agreements, while not solving conflicts, preserved an armed peace if both sides kept to the terms. In the film, Union and Confederate forces have agreed to fire salvos at specified times, which enabled them to avoid any casualties – a parody of the Cold War ‘balance of terror.’ The Test Ban Treaty of that year showed that military power could be constrained through negotiations and, by analogy, the conflict over civil rights could equally be addressed by positive action and firm commitment by the federal government.

Whilst Hollywood was wary of tackling the issue of slavery it continued its change of emphasis with the northerner as hero and the southerner as villain. In *The Deadly Companions* a Union soldier is pursuing the Confederate who had partially scalped him as he lay wounded on the battlefield. Scalping is an act of savagery that distinguishes the civilised white man from the uncivilised forces – the Native Americans - therefore it places the southerner in the same category. This marked a change as, in 1955, the PCA had written to John Ford forbidding him to allow Ethan, in *The Searchers*, ‘to scalp an Indian’ as it was ‘a savage act.’<sup>79</sup> Instead Ethan shoots the dead Comanche through his eyes to prevent him entering the spirit land. The other story line in *The Deadly Companions* involves the transport of a child’s body, accidentally shot by the northern hero, across a hostile country to be buried next to his father. In the context of the day the journey can be seen as the North expiating its guilt of not carrying out its promise to the African Americans (the dead child) and in successfully challenging Jim Crow and rebellion by frustrating Turk’s plans of secession and the reintroduction of slavery.

The collapse of the southern code of honour was highlighted in the brief Civil War episode in *How the West Was Won* (1962). In this film a young Texan attempts to shoot at Union generals Grant and Sherman as they discuss the future after the Battle of Shiloh. He is prevented by a Union soldier, who kills him. This was a similar situation to *Run of the Arrow*. In that film, O’Meara had an opportunity to shoot Grant at Appomattox but lowers his gun as he is told that he would have to shoot the Confederate General Lee as well, as

‘the shame will kill him.’ Even in the light-hearted *Advance to the Rear* the southern guerrilla leader, Zattig, is described as a ‘combination of Quantrill and ‘bloody’ Bill Anderson.’ Zattig acts to his role. After stealing the Union gold he attempts to take it to Mexico rather than hand it over to the Confederacy. In all these films Hollywood took a mild, but pro-North, line

Hollywood reverted to the old conventions of sectional reconciliation, southern paternalism and honour in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1961),<sup>80</sup> which opened just before the centennial celebrations and the Freedom Rides. In this film Chad, an orphaned boy, is brought up before the Civil War by (future) Unionist and then Confederate families. When the war comes, Chad chooses to fight for unity. Both of the men closest to him, the Unionist Caleb and the Confederate Major Buford, are killed in the same battle and Chad buries them side by side. There were ‘no two better men’ he says, and wonders ‘why they had to be killed.’ After the war he returns to erect a headstone with the words that his ex-Confederate ‘father’ had said to him before he died: ‘every man on both sides was in the right who did his duty.’ Hollywood had gone back sixty years to a story written when reconciliation and Jim Crow were at their height, to emphasise the tragedy of the Civil War – of noble, white Americans fighting each other. The ritual hallowing of southern, and American, valour returns when a Confederate flag is taken down and formally returned with the words that ‘the Confederate forces have defended your flag with honour.’ The film was in tune with the official centennial theme - unity, valour and honour - with no mention of freedom. Nevertheless, it did raise issues of rights and moral choices through the ‘prophet’ who stands in the market place berating the southerners for declaring that the ‘government has robbed them of their rights.’<sup>81</sup> But these rights are white rights, the rights of secession and disunion, not the civil rights of all citizens. Later Chad faces a moral choice when the ‘prophet’ says to him ‘woe to him who calls evil good and good evil. Look into your heart and seek the truth.’ It is at this point that Chad realises that he must reject disunion: the unity of the country had to come first. As Kennedy later realised, it ultimately became a moral choice.

The other film that took a reconciliationist approach was *Advance to the Rear*.<sup>82</sup> The film has elements of the Keystone Cops and the Marx Brothers but while it has fun with the Civil War scenario, underneath there is a serious intent. Whilst the incompetent Union soldiers muddle through most of the film, in the end they win with American flair and

creativity. The Confederates use a sexy spy to seduce information out of the Union officers, but she fails to deliver and falls in love with the northern lieutenant. Meanwhile the pro-southern guerrilla leader proves an untrustworthy and incompetent ally. This parody of war with its anti-war theme questions both the Civil War and the Cold War. This theme is present again in *How the West Was Won* where the Confederate soldier wonders why the west is involved when the war started in the east – the east, in the 1960s is Europe where the Cold War is centred. Seth, the Union soldier, replies that ‘I don’t rightly know....there ain’t much glory looking at a man with his guts hanging out.’ This was the question that the younger New Left historians were beginning to ask in the 1960s: what had been achieved by all the slaughter? <sup>83</sup> A question already asked in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*.

Although Hollywood turned away from directly confronting the issues of civil rights and freedom in a Civil War setting, it approached them indirectly, given the Cold War context, in a number of films set in other countries. In the mid-1950s *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) were concerned with the freeing of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and with the harsh slave conditions in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II. From 1959 Hollywood produced a series of films about liberation and freedom: *Ben Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *El Cid* (1961) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Both the Cold War implications and the civil rights message of these films were obvious - freedom can be achieved by standing up and fighting for one’s rights. There were two other films that looked at the aftermath of slavery (Reconstruction). *Exodus* (1960) traced the journey of Jews from the Nazi concentration camps seeking the ‘Promised Land’ as African Americans thought they had done in 1865, while *Judgement at Nuremburg* (1962) examined the Nazi war crimes. It was only a few years since Kenneth Stampp had published his rebuttal of Ulrich Phillips’s idyllic picture of the plantation in *The Peculiar Institution* (1956) and Stanley Elkins his psychological analysis, *Slavery* (1959), in which he suggested that the slave plantation had the same effect upon the slaves as a Nazi concentration camp had on its prisoners. By analogy, *Judgement at Nuremburg* could imply that the southern slave-owners were on trial.

Hollywood also turned to the other side of the Cold War message – American patriotism. Whilst John Wayne was starring in *The Horse Soldiers* he was also heavily involved in planning his version of *The Alamo* (1960), in which a small group of white Americans

fought several thousand Mexican troops in 1836, in their attempt to gain independence from Mexico. Although they are all killed, the message at the end of the film is clear - they are brave Americans defending freedom and justice against a despotic Mexican regime.<sup>84</sup> (What was not mentioned in the film was that the Americans wanted a restoration of political privileges and slavery, both of which had recently been withdrawn.) Continuing the theme of bringing freedom to those living under repressive regimes was *The Longest Day* (1962) - about the D-Day invasion of Europe. While not directly mentioning the Nazi's racial and anti-civil rights policies and the other restrictions imposed on the conquered Europeans, the audience could infer the ultimate triumph of American values through sacrifice and patriotism.

### **'I have seen the promised land'**

1963 was the political turning point for the Civil Rights Movement. The success of the campaign in Birmingham led to protests by African Americans across America. By December over three hundred cities had accepted some degree of integration and many had established biracial committees to examine further desegregation. In August, the March on Washington gave the Civil Rights Movement a national platform and the presence of white people and religious leaders from many denominations reinforced the demand for racial integration. Kennedy had already committed himself to civil rights legislation to 'confront a moral issue.....as old as the scriptures and as clear as the American Constitution... whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities.'<sup>85</sup> The Kennedy administration used every argument from moral outrage to Cold War politics to convince Congress. During his testimony on the Civil Rights Bill, the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was questioned about whether he would support civil rights demonstrations. He replied, that '(i)f I were denied what our Negro citizens are denied, I would demonstrate.'<sup>86</sup> Civil Rights was now at the centre of the domestic agenda and Kennedy's assassination was used by Lyndon Johnson not only to push the bill through but also to strengthen it.

1963 was also the year of the last major event of the centennial with the celebration at Gettysburg – where the encounter at the Angle had become 'the high water mark of the Confederacy.'<sup>87</sup> Gettysburg, in July 1963, was not the great festival of white reconciliation it had been in 1913, coming after the world had gazed at pictures of children beaten by



police in Birmingham and Kennedy's pledge on civil rights. There were now expressions of regret that so many had died, and yet the promise of civil rights for the African Americans remained uncompleted.<sup>88</sup> With the memory of the Civil War gradually being appropriated by those who were once excluded and with Kennedy's death, the growing importance of Vietnam and the centennial ending in Confederate defeat, the celebrations gradually faded away. What was left to the South was their symbol of resistance – the Confederate flag.

By the end of 1963 there was hope that the Civil Rights Movement would achieve its aim but there was still formidable opposition. In Congress the Civil Rights Bill was making little progress. In the South the white backlash continued, with violent incidents increasing support for the more hard line populists like George Wallace of Alabama and a revival of the Ku Klux Klan. The lack of protection given to civil rights workers in their voter registration campaigns in the South by the federal government, despite promises to the contrary, was altering the balance in the Civil Rights Movement from restraint to more assertive protection and political action. The suspicion that the whites could not be trusted grew rapidly. Opinion polls indicated that 'anti-Negro prejudice is widespread and deeply rooted in the U.S., extending to the vast majority of ordinary, well-meaning Americans.'<sup>89</sup> Despite détente beginning in Europe, Washington was still concerned with suppressing communism at home and fighting it abroad, and increasingly concerned about the situation in South-East Asia.

Hollywood was now faced with a different scenario. The Lost Cause myth was being dismantled by the continuous challenge of African Americans through non-violent direct action and for appropriate representation in the Commission's centennial celebrations – the possibility of holding separate events, as African Americans had during the semi-centennial, did not arise. At the same time the political mood of the country was changing. The unfinished business of the Civil War had to be addressed. In contrast to other films, African Americans had been largely excluded from Civil War films as the civil rights protests increased. If the legislation was passed, how would Hollywood respond? What sort of roles would be available to African Americans? How would slavery be portrayed? In view of the opposition in the south to civil rights, would Civil War films still be profitable there? In the north, the inner city theatres were increasingly patronised by African Americans and other minorities who had moved into the housing vacated by the



white flight to the suburbs. Would they accept Civil War movies, which did not take account of the new reality of civil rights and national identity? Or would Hollywood take up the new mood of inclusion?

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King Jr.'s, speech, Washington D. C., 28 August, 1963.
- <sup>2</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 221; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 281.
- <sup>3</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 223-4.
- <sup>4</sup> Herman Eugene Talmadge, *You and Segregation*, 1955, quoted in Thomas Borstleman, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001) 108.
- <sup>5</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 393.
- <sup>6</sup> C. Van Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, revised 1968, first published 1960), 11.
- <sup>7</sup> Tom P. Brady, 'Black Monday: Segregation or Amalgamation....America Has Its Choice' quoted in Alison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race During the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 18; Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 281. This tract, published in July 1954, became the manifesto of the White Citizens' Councils.
- <sup>8</sup> *Jackson Daily News*, Mississippi, 18 May 1954 quoted by Yasuhiro Katagiri, "Blurring the Color-Line?: Reflections on Interracial and Multiracial America," *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel – An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies*, 6, (2000/01). Available from: <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/49thparallel/backissue6/KATIGIRI.HTM> (accessed 11 July, 2003).
- <sup>9</sup> Brian Henderson, 'The Searchers: An American Dilemma.' *Film Quarterly*, 34 (Winter, 1980/1), 20.
- <sup>10</sup> Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 268.
- <sup>11</sup> Harold J Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 194-208, 220, 224-5.
- <sup>12</sup> Motion Picture Production Code (1934), II 3.6.
- <sup>13</sup> It is now accepted that Thomas Jefferson sired mulatto children and it has been recently revealed that the champion of segregation, Strom Thurmond, did likewise. *The Guardian Weekend*, 10 January, 2005.
- <sup>14</sup> Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 70; Graham, *Framing the South*, 133-4.
- <sup>15</sup> Alan Le May, *The Searchers* (New York: Curtis Publishing Company, 1954).
- <sup>16</sup> In the novel Laurie goes further in her hatred, 168-9.
- <sup>17</sup> Henderson, 'The Searchers,' 34, 7.
- <sup>18</sup> The book suggests that Ethan changes his mind as he rushes through Scar's camp chasing a figure that he thinks is Debbie. It is not. The Native American woman turns round and shoots him, 217.
- <sup>19</sup> Henderson, *The Searchers*, 22-3.
- <sup>20</sup> Written, produced and directed by Sam Fuller.
- <sup>21</sup> Interview with Sam Fuller, reported in the *University of California, Los Angeles, Film Archive*, 1990 (PCA file on *Run of the Arrow*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).

- <sup>22</sup> In this 1950 film an U.S. army scout brings about peace between the whites and the Apache. He falls in love and marries an Apache woman but she is killed by whites, who are trying to stir up unrest.
- <sup>23</sup> Letter from Geoffrey Shurlock to William Feeder at RKO Radio Pictures, 12 April, 1956 (PCA file on *Run of the Arrow*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).
- <sup>24</sup> Jessamyn West, *The Friendly Persuasion* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1981, first published 1945), 13.
- <sup>25</sup> John Hunt Morgan commanded the First Kentucky cavalry, which operated as an independent raiding unit under the Confederate High Command. He concentrated on destroying Union communication systems but his men acted more and more like thieves. In July 1863 he crossed into Indiana – not 1862 as the film indicates. Available from: *ehistory.osu.edu* (accessed 5 September, 2005).
- <sup>26</sup> *Variety*, 26 September, 1956; *Films in Review*, January, 1957; *Chicago American*, 14 October, 1956; *San Francisco Progress*, 7/8 November 1956; *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October, 1956.
- <sup>27</sup> *Band of Angels* was written by Robert Penn Warren and published in 1955.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter to Jack Warner, Warner Bros., 15 January, 1957 (PCA file on *Band of Angels*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).
- <sup>29</sup> *Hollywood Reporter*, 10 July, 1957.
- <sup>30</sup> In the book Bond is captured and hanged muttering ‘All niggers...ass-deep in niggers’ as Amantha and Rau-Ru look on. Robert Penn Warren, *Band of Angels* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 323-4.
- <sup>31</sup> Ross Lockridge Jr., *Raintree County*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 439.
- <sup>32</sup> Schary had produced *Crossfire* (1947) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1949).
- <sup>33</sup> *Films in Review*, January 1958.
- <sup>34</sup> James Powers, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 4 October, 1957.
- <sup>35</sup> Letter from Geoffrey Shurlock to Dore Schary, 9 July 1956 (PCA file on *Raintree County*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles). The exact scene is not identified but presumably relates to the ‘blackening up’ scene at the election celebration party.
- <sup>36</sup> This is explored by Nina Silber in Chapter III of her book, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1993).
- <sup>37</sup> Letter from Geoffrey Shurlock to Dore Schary, 2 February 1956 (PCA file on *Raintree County*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).
- <sup>38</sup> *Showmen’s Trade Review*, 5 October, 1957; *Motion Picture Chronicle*, 5 October, 1957.
- <sup>39</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, 4 October, 1957.
- <sup>40</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films, New Third Edition* (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1994, first published 1973).
- <sup>41</sup> *Hollywood Reporter*, 13 March, 1957.
- <sup>42</sup> There is one supporting role in *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) and brief background appearances in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1961).
- <sup>43</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2001), 357.

<sup>44</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 8-11, 390; Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 82-3; Nell Irwin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States 1877-1919* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 279.

<sup>45</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 63-4; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 324-8.

<sup>46</sup> Lincoln was central to these celebrations and the centenary of his birth in 1909 was an early Civil War celebration.

<sup>47</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 368-75.

<sup>48</sup> House Joint Resolution No. 253, 1957, Public Law 85-305; 71 Stat. 628, Eva Maria Brownwall, *Die Amerikanner und ihr Krieg: Analyse der Jahrhundertfeier des Civil War in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika 1961-1965* (Stuttgart: J.B. Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1978), 141.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Cook, 'From Shiloh to Selma: The Impact of the Civil War Centennial on the Black Freedom Struggle in the United States, 1961-65', in Brian Ward and Tony Badger (eds.), *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement* (London: MacMillan Press Limited, 1996), 134.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 98.

<sup>51</sup> Cook, 'From Shiloh to Selma,' 139-40.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Cook, 'The Historical Significance of the Civil War Centennial,' at a seminar at the University of Oxford, 11 March, 2003.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Cook, 'Unfinished Business: African Americans and the Civil War Centennial,' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J Parish., (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 51.

<sup>54</sup> C. Van Woodward, 'Equality: the Deferred Commitment,' *The American Scholar*, XXVII, (1958), 459-72, reprinted in *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, revised 1968, first published 1960), 86.

<sup>55</sup> Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 165.

<sup>56</sup> Television westerns dominated the evening schedules by the autumn of 1959. James L. Baughman, 'The Weakest Chain and the Strongest Link: The American Broadcasting Company and the Motion Picture Industry, 1955-60,' in Tino Balio, (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1990).

<sup>57</sup> Between 1953 and 1962 the number of westerns declined from 92 (27%) to 11 (9%) of the total of films produced each year. B.F.I.: *Companion to the Western* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1988), p. 47; Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 71.

<sup>58</sup> *Friendly Persuasion, Band of Angels, Raintree County, Run of the Arrow.*

<sup>59</sup> Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> J. T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978), 96.

<sup>61</sup> The film is based on the 1956 book, *The Horse Soldiers*, by Harold Sinclair, which told the story of the Grierson raid in April 1863. There are no plantations, Southern belles or African Americans in the book. It is a tale of military guerrilla tactics and extreme hardship as the Union troops are pursued for 600 miles.



<sup>62</sup> Neil Longley York, *Fiction as Fact: The Horse Soldiers and Popular Memory* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001), 127.

<sup>63</sup> *New York Times*, 26 June, 1959; *Variety*, 10 and 12 June, 1959.

<sup>64</sup> *Variety*, 10 June, 1959.

<sup>65</sup> In the three years before Greensboro there had been sixteen sit-ins. William T. Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance* (New York: MacMillan, 1997), 57.

<sup>66</sup> These were planned by the Congress of Racial Equality to test out the implementation of the 1960 Supreme Court's judgement in *Boynton v. Virginia* that racial segregation was illegal on inter-state buses and trains and in terminals.

<sup>67</sup> Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 136-7.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas J. Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, first published 1954), 8; Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 137-142.

<sup>69</sup> York, *Fiction as Fact*, 128.

<sup>70</sup> Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America 1945-90* (New York: MacMillan, 1991), 66.

<sup>71</sup> The Kennedy strategists calculated that fewer than 180 of the 435 members of the House of Representatives would regularly support liberal measures. In the 1961 session only seven out of 23 domestic bills were passed – and none of these were radical measures. Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>72</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 307.

<sup>73</sup> While Wilson's appearance at Gettysburg has become a significant moment it was a last minute decision. He only stayed long enough to deliver his speech. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 10-12.

<sup>74</sup> Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 142.

<sup>75</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 280; Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, 73.

<sup>76</sup> Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 84.

<sup>77</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 187.

<sup>78</sup> Quotation from Lincoln's Springfield Speech, 17 June, 1858.

<sup>79</sup> Shurlock to Ford 20 June, 1955. (PCA file on *The Searchers*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles). In the book Ethan scalps the Comanche – then throws it away for the wolves to find. Le May, *The Searchers*, 28.

<sup>80</sup> The film is based on the 1903 best-selling novel of the same name by John Fox Jr. and had been filmed twice before - in 1920 and 1928.

<sup>81</sup> The 'prophet,' in the film, is introduced as Chad's conscience. In the book Chad's moral dilemma about which side to support is discussed in detail.

<sup>82</sup> The original short story, *Company of Cowards*, was set in Europe in 1944. It was written by William Chamberlain and published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, 10 March, 1956. Jack Schaefer took the idea and wrote a short novel, also called *Company of Cowards*, published in 1957. Schaefer transferred the location to the Civil War. Both of these were serious works addressing the problems that individual soldiers faced in war

- self-belief, reasons for fighting and patriotism. Schaefer wrote the screen outline and the script. However while keeping the Civil War location, outwardly the whole tenor of the story was inverted from heroic tragedy to farce.

<sup>83</sup> John S. Rosenberg, 'Towards a New Civil War Revisionism,' *American Scholar*, 38 (1969), 250-272.

<sup>84</sup> Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, 105.

<sup>85</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 274-5, 280.

<sup>86</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights*, 183-187.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 217.

<sup>88</sup> Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 143-4.

<sup>89</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 302.

## Chapter 6

### THE LAST CYCLE: CIVIL WAR FILMS 1964-75

*'We had a dream and we are losing it'*<sup>1</sup>

With civil rights legislation going through Congress, Hollywood returned to the Civil War. It was not the Civil War of *The Horse Soldiers*, previously praised by the United States Civil War Centennial Commission, but one where African Americans emerged from the background to play more significant and positive roles. This cycle is different to previous cycles as Hollywood produced a range of representations reflecting the changing debate over race, civil rights and identity and looked indirectly at Cuba and the war in Vietnam. It petered out in 1972 in parody and disillusion. These films completed the demolition of Hollywood's myths of the Civil War: the Southern character was discredited, miscegenation was accepted and the symbol of the beneficial plantation destroyed.

Even as the high-water mark of the Civil Rights Movement and of Lyndon Johnson's presidency was celebrated in 1964-65, those same years sowed the seeds of disunity in the Civil Rights Movement and the undoing of a great vision. As the war in Vietnam escalated it drained political impetus, goodwill and financial support for the Great Society.<sup>2</sup> The Civil Rights Movement splintered over the issues of the use of violence, separatism, and the failure of the federal government to fulfil its promises. By the end of the decade Richard Milhouse Nixon had capitalised on the anti-war movement, the frustration of African Americans at the slow pace of change, the backlash of northern working class whites and the rise of the Christian fundamentalist right, to forge a new alliance and slow down progress on civil rights reform. Nixon's downfall over Watergate forced Americans back to re-examine their beliefs in the Constitution – with the bicentennial of the Revolution only two years away – and away from the issue of equality.

Hollywood's difficulties continued throughout the 1960s, building up to the severe financial crisis of 1969-72. This led eventually to complete the transformation of the industry to one where film production was just part of a conglomerate empire. The revision of the Production Code in 1966 and its demise in 1968 allowed Hollywood to exploit the increasing violence in society and be more explicit about sexual, and inter-racial, relationships. Hollywood discovered a new audience, the African Americans who inhabited the inner city areas, and produced films with black heroes and heroines –

Blaxploitation – which reversed the traditional white and black roles.<sup>3</sup> Young production executives encouraged the equally young independent directors, who no longer had to worry about the Production Code, and who had different interests and new visions.<sup>4</sup> They created, for a few years, the ‘Hollywood Renaissance.’<sup>5</sup> With the Civil War apparently abandoned by Hollywood, television - now the main medium of popular culture - took over and began to produce films, documentaries and miniseries.

### **Hollywood returns to the Civil War**

It was not the centennial celebrations that returned Hollywood to the Civil War but the change in the attitude of the Kennedy administration towards the issue of civil rights under the pressure exerted by the Civil Rights Movement. Kennedy’s policy had been to resolve the issue of civil rights through a minimum of legislation, executive orders, action through the federal courts and an increasingly productive economy, whilst he attended to the more important issue of containing communism abroad.<sup>6</sup> The Civil Rights Movement however persisted in claiming its rights through non-violent direct action, which sought to create situations which would force local white communities that had ‘constantly refused to negotiate [to] confront the issue.’ The policy was not to provoke violent reaction, although it was accepted that this would probably be the response, but to expose Southern violence to the world. This was particularly successful at Birmingham, Alabama, in May 1963, where the apparent violence of the police, filmed by television, revealed the true nature of Southern segregation.<sup>7</sup> Kennedy’s response was to make civil rights a ‘moral issue’ and to legislate. For the first time since the 1870s a federal government was fully committed to implementing equality and had the backing of public opinion.<sup>8</sup> The national agenda had been set.

The Civil Rights Movement had managed to maintain the moral high ground through its policy of non-violent direct action and through Martin Luther King Jr.’s marriage of the American creed with strong Christian beliefs.<sup>9</sup> But it was not just about moral clarity and idealism, until 1965 the Civil Rights Movement was able to balance this with political effectiveness.<sup>10</sup> The March on Washington in August 1963 was inter-racial and inter-denominational and demonstrated to the world that the Civil Rights Movement was ‘strong, united, determined and responsible.’<sup>11</sup> For the first time since the blacklist, liberal Hollywood stars felt able to demonstrate their support for a liberal cause without being

labelled a communist. Sixty top Hollywood stars attended.<sup>12</sup> Many were now independent of the studios. With such a public demonstration of support by the stars, whose presence in films was demanded by the financial backers as some guarantee of success, it made it easier for Hollywood to return to the Civil War. But now it was acceptable to re-introduce race into the narrative and to treat it positively - even with the western setting and the themes of unity and reconciliation.

The Civil Rights Movement was again influencing Hollywood and changing popular culture. By continually contesting the major theme of the centennial celebrations – unity – the Civil Rights Movement had forced America to acknowledge that the memory of the Civil War was also about emancipation and inclusiveness and that resolving the question of civil rights for African Americans was its logical conclusion. This fitted well with America's foreign policy of containing communism by stressing the democracy and freedom of the West in contrast to the totalitarianism of the communist states.<sup>13</sup> Civil War films could be about freedom and equality, and the injustices caused by their denial, as well as improved race relations. The fact that Kennedy's assassination occurred in the South, and that the assassin was a white man, made it less risky for films to have an inter-racial content as well as continuing the perception that racism was a sectional and not a national problem - especially as most of the films were set in the south and south-west.

Hollywood's Civil War films of 1964 reflected the new attitude towards civil rights. *Invitation to a Gunfighter* (1964) looked back to *Band of Angels* with suppressed anger against slavery suddenly erupting. However its central 'black' anti-hero was a Creole and played by a Caucasian, Yul Brynner, whilst Rau-Ru, in *Band*, had been played by the African American Sidney Poitier. Hollywood was again being cautious by using a white star as a mulatto, for obvious marketing reasons, to represent the African Americans, very much as it had used white women in mulatto roles in the 1940s and 1950s. The film is a portrait of contemporary America, which touches on the old Southern myths. Yul Brynner (Jules) is hired by townspeople to kill the Confederate (Martin) who has returned from the Civil War to find that his property has been sold and he naturally wants it back. The town had supported the Union because it was against 'secession and slavery' but these fine words hid northern racism. The Mexican townspeople were kept firmly in their ghetto of Mexicantown. 'How do they vote,' asks Jules. 'They're different,' says the banker hiring Jules, 'they go their way, we go ours.' African Americans living in their inner city ghettos



would surely recognise the Mexicans' situation as analogous to their own. *Invitation* is a dialogue with 1960s racism, white supremacy, Lost Cause myth and hypocrisy. Jules acts as the conscience, saviour and finally martyr to the cause of racial justice and understanding – just as the civil rights activists were. He questions the liberal view expressed by Ruth, Martin's former lover, who cared 'about men buying and selling other men' even though she had never seen slavery, and opposes it with his experience, ironically suggesting that 'black men are born to be slaves.' The young, black radicals in the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) understood that hating the idea in the abstract, as Ruth did, is one thing, living under it is entirely different.

Jules exposes how racial intolerance, corruption and greed dominate society. He is at first refused a room at the local hotel until he waves his money around: greed wins out over principle and prejudice. The barber tries to sell Jules a watch for double the price he told the owner, on whose behalf he is selling it; the stable owner tries to sell him a lame horse. The local banker, who owns most of the town, dominates the sheriff and the democratic process. Law and order is subverted by hiring a gunman to kill another man without a trial and with no regard to his innocence or guilt.<sup>14</sup> This is the language of lynching, the language of informal and unlawful social control that still pervaded the South as in the case of the three civil rights workers who were murdered in Mississippi in 1964.<sup>15</sup> Finally, filled with disgust at the overall corruption in the town, Jules destroys buildings on the main street – foreshadowing the urban riots of 1964-68.

Jules acts out a variant of the 'buck' role that Donald Bogle has identified.<sup>16</sup> He is not violent and over-sexed but sophisticated, handsome, morally superior and self-assured. He is able to charm women of all ages. Here indeed is the real fear of southern white males: an African American who is able to attract white females as a man, and not attempt rape to satisfy some imagined animal lust. Ruth is attracted and plans to leave with him. Once again Hollywood is cautious about a black/white physical relationship, and nothing happens between them. Instead Jules acts out the Christian symbolism of death and rebirth. He refuses to kill Martin and denies himself the possibility of finding some inner happiness by refusing to let Ruth go with him. He gives Martin his killer's fee 'for the emancipation of the local slaves.' He humiliates the banker before the townspeople to show that they have nothing to fear from him if they act together. However, Jules is accidentally shot by Martin, who then kills the banker. Jules' death brings about a rebirth as it unites the town

and, symbolically, the country. White townspeople and Mexicans carry his body away with Martin and Ruth following, hand in hand, the races united, North and South united, America united.

The double symbol of reconciliation changes for the first time the Hollywood tradition of white North marrying white South. In *Band of Angels*, Rau-Ru's waving goodbye was preceded by an act in the master-slave relationship – helping his master to escape; in *Invitation* the coming together is a voluntary action breaking down the inter-racial barriers. It is reminiscent of the coming together at the end of the March on Washington giving hope for the future and also of the coming together of America after Kennedy's death. Hollywood, however, did not forget its southern audiences or its standard Civil War stereotypes. Martin has a reputation for being a very good marksman (one Southerner can lick ten Yankees) and returns from the war unscathed (in contrast to the dead, maimed and blinded Union supporters). Sympathy is evoked for him for the loss of his farm (carpet-bagging) and he did not go to war to defend slavery ('who's ever seen a slave in these parts'). So why did he go to war? Is he just a born rebel, as Ruth suggests, or is it something else? Both Martin and Jules are outsiders and outsiders confront consensus. Martin is an outsider as he supported the South but also accepted the Mexicans as equals. Jules is the external dark force brought in to solve a problem like the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Both expose society for what it is. Jules, the African American, and Martin, the Southerner, are the outsiders in 1960s America and it is their reconciliation that holds the key to better race relations in the future. Jules, however, in not killing Martin has the higher moral ground but, as a hired killer, has to be sacrificed, as the Production Code dictated, to achieve that message.

The reconciliation theme between African Americans and white racist southerners is taken up in other films. In *Rio Conchos* (1964), the main African American character, Franklyn, is set against an unreconstructed racist, Lassiter. In the book there are no African Americans so the introduction of Franklyn is a deliberate decision to highlight the civil rights issue.<sup>17</sup> The story is set in 1867 and revolves around the theft from the federal army of a new type of quick-firing rifle by former Confederates who are planning to invade the southern states from their base in Mexico. Lassiter has been found with one of these rifles and is allowed out of military prison to help find them. As the search progresses a mutual respect develops between the two and they die together as they destroy the stolen rifles.

There are similar examples in *Major Dundee* (1965). Following one racial incident, when a Confederate soldier tries to provoke the African American sergeant, Aesop, by reminding him of his former slave status, the Confederate captain compliments Aesop publicly on his actions earlier in the day. This does not happen in the book where Aesop just 'melts away.'<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of the film, when Aesop and a Confederate soldier are observing the French soldiers, Aesop confidently remarks that he and his 'boys can take that outfit.' The Confederate agrees and Aesop replies 'they've never been South.' With this conspiratorial and inclusive comment they look at each other and laugh.<sup>19</sup>

*Major Dundee* was the first film since *The Birth of a Nation* in which African American soldiers were seen to be engaged in military activities during the Civil War.<sup>20</sup> It was followed by *Shenandoah* (1965), which also contained African American and southern white reconciliation in the friendship of two boys: Gabriel, the African American slave and Boy, the youngest son of the white Anderson family. Boy had taken to wearing a Confederate cap that he had found, so when Union troops come upon them, Boy is considered a Rebel and is taken away, while Gabriel is told, by a light-skinned African American soldier, that he is free.<sup>21</sup> The two boys later meet on the battlefield. Boy lies injured. Gabriel is about to bayonet him when he recognises Boy and carries him to safety - just like his angel namesake or as the 'faithful slave.' However, their past relationship was one of mutual friendship and Boy came from a family that did not own slaves nor had any wish to do so. Gabriel's action therefore is one of humanity and compassion enlarged to a symbol of reconciliation – the extension of the hand of friendship between the races.

These films coincided with the high point of the Civil Rights Movement: the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Rights Act (1965), Johnson's 'unconditional war on poverty' and the creation of a 'Great Society,' which would also end 'racial injustice,' and the Immigration Reform Act (1965).<sup>22</sup> Two years later the Supreme Court ruled that any state laws forbidding marriage between people of different races were unconstitutional.<sup>23</sup> The concept of American national identity as being white and European was being replaced by a 'pluralist civic definition of Americanism.'<sup>24</sup> At the same time the centennial celebrations fizzled out with only about 5,000 people attending the last ceremony at Appomattox Court House where Lee had surrendered to Grant.<sup>25</sup> The memory of the Civil War had changed and the theme of unity needed revising to include the memory of all Americans. But while the framework of racial justice was being established, the hope of continuing progress

towards racial harmony was threatened. Urban rioting in depressed African American communities started in New York in 1964, followed by Los Angeles in 1965 and then other northern cities in the following years. Young African American activists, badly bruised after their experiences in the south and their handling at the Democratic Party Convention in 1964, began to reject non-violence, the federal government and integration. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 Johnson increasingly turned his attention to Vietnam. As he committed more troops there a new protest movement grew. Hollywood became less certain of the mood and direction of the country and its Civil War films reflected this.

### **Two steps forward one step back**

The strains within the Civil Rights Movement came to a head during 1965-66 just as 'the dream' was appearing to become the reality. Up till then there was a shared belief between white liberals and black leaders that racism could be overturned through the political process. The basic tenets of American civic nationalism were the foundations of the good society and all that was needed was to develop the right framework to give equal opportunity to every citizen and race relations would be improved.<sup>26</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., had signed up to this in the mid-1950s seeing the issue not as a race war but as one between justice and injustice<sup>27</sup> while, in 1963, he told the March on Washington that the 'Negro dream is rooted in the American dream.'<sup>28</sup> This belief in the American tradition and his political intuition enabled King to achieve national status and to keep the movement together. However, the experience of the younger black activists had forced them to the conclusion that racism was institutionalised. The only way to challenge it was by direct confrontation, by dealing with the social and economic disadvantages faced by African Americans and by developing their own black national identity: some joined the Nation of Islam, others followed the 'Black Power' path and some looked to complete separation.

The split in the Civil Rights Movement undermined and, eventually, ended its moral leadership and influence. Although King changed the emphasis of the civil rights demands in the Chicago campaign of 1966 to social and economic inequalities, and began to articulate a more radical and anti-war agenda, it was too late to keep the movement together or to maintain the same passion and momentum. Taking the campaign north and using the same tactics that had proved successful in the south did not have the same effect



on working class whites nor receive the same support from African Americans. Many of the liberal white supporters were concerned by the more militant and separatist views of leaders like Malcolm X and drifted away to other issues, in particular in opposing the Vietnam War, or were marginalised and forced out of the SNCC. By 1966 white attitudes had changed, with 85% thinking that African Americans were seeking too much too fast, compared to only 34% in 1964.<sup>29</sup> The effect of the urban riots was to picture African Americans as hooligans who were out of control, rather than as patriots who shared the same American values as white citizens. This was history repeating itself: the flag-bearing peaceful marchers of the early 1960s were now the mythical post-Civil War black radicals.<sup>30</sup>

With the Civil Rights Movement fracturing and with deteriorating race relations, Hollywood stepped back from its more positive and prominent portrayal of African Americans to its myths – the all-white western, the loyal African American servant and no inter-racial romance. Loyal servants appear in two films – *Alvarez Kelly* (1966) and *Journey to Shiloh* (1968) – which both include plantation settings. The plantation made a comeback in the late 1960s Civil War films but it played a very different role to that of the 1930s. While the African Americans in both films express their support for the system the films raise questions about slavery and the current state of race relations. In *Alvarez Kelly* the slaves support the Confederates in their successful attempt to steal a herd of cattle brought to a plantation to provide meat for the Union army. The Union major cannot understand it. ‘We’re down here fighting for you, fighting to free you. How can you be so loyal to someone who wants to keep you a slave?’ The slaves have a choice: to walk away ‘free’ into an unknown war situation or to stay in a comparatively safe and protected environment – one that they know. In the mid-1960s this was, for all its problems, the inner city ghetto.

The other film, *Journey to Shiloh*,<sup>31</sup> took a more ironic look at the question of citizenship and national identity. Seven young Texans, the ‘Concho County Comanches,’ set out for Richmond, Virginia, to join the Texas Brigade. They cross into Louisiana where they meet Jacob, the first African American that they have ever seen. Jacob does not appear in the book so his inclusion is inserted specifically to attack racial prejudice.<sup>32</sup> Jacob runs the cotton gin for the plantation owner Colonel Claiborne. He has his own house – ‘better than mine’ one of the Texans states in wonder – and family and is perfectly at ease with these



young whites. Jacob identifies not only with his master - 'a mighty fine gentleman' – but also with the South. 'I hear tell the Yankees are fighting us,' he says, 'we'll whip them though.....us Southerners.' The Texans are confused as they ride on. They are bemused as to why he called himself a 'Southerner' - only whites referred to themselves as Southerners in the 1960s - but as 'he lives here' (in the South) he cannot be a 'Northerner.' Here is a man who speaks well, is happy in his work, has a responsible job, identifies with his country and the only difference between them is the colour of his skin. No wonder that it 'doesn't make much sense.'

By 1968 there was confusion over the racial issue. Campaigning in the north, Martin Luther King, Jr., commented that he had 'never seen so much hatred and hostility.'<sup>33</sup> Recent studies have shown the extent of segregation in the north from 1945 and particularly among the white 'ethnic' working class who could not move out to the suburbs.<sup>34</sup> Their opposition to racial inclusion increased further over the amount of taxpayers money going into welfare support and the Community Action Programmes that were seen to be disproportionately benefiting the African Americans. They viewed the black urban underclass as a threat by bringing crime and violence into their white communities. Demands for desegregation by 'outside agitator,' like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and white liberals, was viewed as direct provocation and gave an excuse for white rage.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, despite the Civil Rights legislation, racism seemed to be more firmly entrenched than ever.

Nevertheless, in the late 1960s Hollywood discovered that, as well as an increasingly younger audience,<sup>36</sup> African Americans in the cities made up 30% of the audience. Hollywood began to produce films targeted at this new audience – Blaxploitation - which helped to pull the industry out of recession.<sup>37</sup> These films featured black actors on the same footing as white actors but reversing the heroic roles.<sup>38</sup> Civil War films resumed the more positive portrayals of African Americans, as in 1964-65, but with a major difference: for the first time they had African Americans as leading characters. It was not that Hollywood had ignored black stars or the issue of race, but had been very wary, with racial turbulence in the cities erupting each summer, towards opening up its Civil War narrative to directly centre on the issue.<sup>39</sup> However, with a new audience and very few constraints, Hollywood looked to sex and violence to revive its fortunes.<sup>40</sup>

The conflict between civil rights and the white backlash and the question of national identity was examined in *The McMasters* (1970). The central character, the African American Benjie, returns home, after fighting in the Civil War, to a ranch in the south-west owned by McMasters - the man who had raised him. After the local racists learn that McMasters has made him an equal partner they set out to make his life unbearable. Benjie is the exemplar and inheritor of the Civil Rights Movement. He supports Martin Luther King Jr.'s espousal of the American dream. He wants to have his own ranch, work hard, obey the law, treat everyone in a fair and equal way. He accepts the concept of manifest destiny to such an extent that the Native Americans call him a 'white man.' Benjie is also the inheritor of Black Power. He will use violence if he, his family and future are threatened. Eventually the 'sick, ignorant, ugliness of racism' explodes.<sup>41</sup> Benjie is humiliated and almost lynched, his wife is raped and his ranch is destroyed. But Benjie, like the civil rights workers, has belief in himself as a man, and in his ideals and he struggles back towards the ruins of his ranch to start again. The film is a stark indictment of the irrationality of racial prejudice.

Two years after *The McMasters*, Sidney Poitier directed *Buck and the Preacher* (1972), a light-hearted Blaxploitation-type film that dealt with African Americans seeking a better future in the west after the Civil War. They are pursued and harassed by bounty hunters, who want them to return to Louisiana, as cheap labour, to work in the plantation fields. The bounty hunters feel the only way forward is to return to the past – 'we got to keep it going like it was, we got to keep things the way they rightfully belong.' The past might be in the mind of southerners but it was not the case on the ground. The civil rights legislation had underlined the rights of African Americans and was supported by Supreme Court judgements, positive discrimination was increasing employment opportunities, while the south and south-west had seen the development of the new high-tech industries in the Sun Belt.<sup>42</sup> By moving west the African Americans were pursuing the American dream and reversing Hollywood's western images of white heroes in a white west.

*Buck and the Preacher* was the last Civil War film that had African Americans playing leading roles until *Glory* in 1989. This long gap indicates once again how the Civil War continues its unique status in American popular culture. It was not that African Americans had been sidelined again. In the 1970s more black actors and actresses worked in the film industry than ever before. In the 1980s came the African American superstar and the

black/white buddy movies.<sup>43</sup> As America recovered from Vietnam and accepted multiculturalism and equality for all, Hollywood gave the impression that there was now racial harmony in America. Ronald Reagan lead the way by declaring that the American spirit knows 'no ethnic, religious, social, political, regional or economic boundaries,' but his social and economic policies attacked the very structures that assisted an inclusive nation.<sup>44</sup> With the emphasis on market forces, patriotism and military dominance, Civil War narratives with African American lead actors would question this new structure of unity.

### **The end of mythology**

By the early 1970s, the Lost Cause myths, and Hollywood's representation of them, had been overturned. The Supreme Court's ruling in 1967 which declared anti-miscegenation laws in Virginia unconstitutional now gave it legitimacy in Civil War films. The ultimate resolution of the inter-racial problem was seen in *Cain's Cut-Throats* (1969) in which a Confederate officer returns from the war to his African American wife and son. By then there were well over 300,000 inter-racial marriages in America each year.<sup>45</sup> In another film, *Bloody Trail* (1972), an African American woman nurses back to health a former Union officer who had been attacked by ex-Confederates. Acceptance of inter-racial relations even occurred in John Wayne films. In *The Undefeated* (1969), Colonel Thomas' (John Wayne) adopted Native American son, Blue Boy, courts and wins the daughter of a former Confederate colonel. And to press the message home about the mixing of blood Wayne states that he is 'as proud of him as if he were my own blood.' (Given Wayne's iconic status this is a considerable advance in race relations from the ambivalence of *The Searchers*.) Another Wayne film, *Rio Lobo* (1970), includes a Confederate captain with French and Mexican parentage and a Confederate sergeant with a Mexican fiancée, while Wayne ends the film limping off to the future - and supported by a Mexican woman. National identity was changing. A pluralistic nation was being accepted.

The 1960s saw a return of the plantation but in a very different way. In *Rio Conchos* an uncompleted plantation-style house is burnt to the ground, indicating that any thought of future rebellion by the planter aristocracy will end in the same way. Similarly in *The Undefeated* the plantation house is set ablaze by the planter himself and its destruction symbolises the end of the South's opposition and future secession. In *Alvarez Kelly* the plantation house is the centre of Confederate intrigue, trickery and rebellion. Nothing can

be trusted from the wiles of the mistress to the complicity of the slaves. The plantation house in *Journey to Shiloh* represents all the arrogance and hypocrisy of the South. The young Texans have been invited to attend a ball by the sons of the planter. They only have their normal buckskin clothes to wear and this causes the refined planter's wife to faint. The planter calls them 'savages' and they are thrown out by his African American servants, dressed immaculately in their uniforms. This is far from the picture of a 'united nation engaged in a holy crusade.'<sup>46</sup> The seven Texans are on their way to fight for the planter and his way of life. Not only are they considered as 'white trash' but the planter forbids his sons to accompany them to fight for the South. (In the book, the sons slip away to join the Texans - but with tragic consequences.) In similar films thirty years earlier they would have been greeted as heroes, now the whole purpose of the war is questioned. This mirrored America in 1968, which was polarised over the war in Vietnam. Yet, as in the Civil War when the wealthy could buy off military service by paying someone else to substitute for them, middle-class Americans could help their sons delay being drafted, which left the poorer and the ethnic groups to serve disproportionately to their population.

Hollywood also dramatically changed its representation of the plantation in Ante Bellum films. It now became 'a vicious system in which the blacks found spiritual uplift in murder and mayhem and the whites in depravity and miscegenation.'<sup>47</sup> Hollywood might have been trying to attract a new audience but its overt depiction of ill-treatment, only hinted at in films like *Band of Angels*, indicated how far the Civil Rights Movement had influenced popular culture. The remake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1965) produced a 'brutal spectacle' with 'Negro slaves whipped and chained.' The 1969 film *Slaves* began a period where white sensitivities were no longer considered as the slaves turn on their master and burn the plantation.<sup>48</sup> Other films showed unbridled miscegenation, the horrors of the Middle Passage, slave seasoning, the murder of slave-owners and slave breeding.<sup>49</sup> While these films gave a representation just as extreme as the previous pro-planter films, they now gave the audience a counter-balance to the plantation past of *Gone with the Wind* (GWTW).<sup>50</sup> At this time historical scholarship, following Stamp and Elkins, was examining the plantation system in great depth. J. W. Blassingame's *The Slave Community* (1972) and Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974) attacked Elkins's 'Sambo' image of dependency and suggested that slaves were troublesome and not docile, that they retained a large cultural heritage from Africa and exhibited a whole range of personality types.<sup>51</sup> The cultural unity, portrayed until the 1940s, had gone. Hollywood would not be



able to return to a benign vision of the plantation – except to titillate or with tongue in cheek.

By the mid-1960s violence had become part of American life with the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy and was increasingly available on the daily television newscasts from Vietnam. Released from the restraints of the Production Code, Hollywood included more scenes of a graphically sexual and violent nature in its attempt to attract its audience back in its battle with television, where the sponsors of programmes took a conservative approach in providing safe, family entertainment.<sup>52</sup>

Violence invaded the Civil War films where it was mainly white on white and perpetrated by southerners. In *Alvarez Kelly*, the eponymous hero is threatened by a Confederate colonel to have all his fingers shot off unless he co-operates. In *Arizona Raiders* (1965), Quantrill and his guerrilla gang continue their amoral robbing and killing spree after the Civil War.<sup>53</sup> However the violence of Parson Josiah Gant in *The Desperados* (1969) is different - it is driven by an inner force, a perversion of religion with the bible used to justify looting, raping and murder. The same can be said of Kolby in *The McMasters*. It is Kolby with his one arm and in his Confederate uniform, who organises the attacks on Benjie. When his men are brought back dead he calls them 'martyrs' who died in a 'holy war' and talks about 'God's terrible swift sword of vengeance.' The Civil War films about John Brown<sup>54</sup> had been turned on their head - the religious fanatics are not Abolitionists but southern racists using every argument to maintain white supremacy.

During the 1950s/1960s the Southern code of honour was shown to be a sham. Southern governors who gave their word and then broke it, as Orval Faubus, Governor of Arkansas, did in 1957 to Eisenhower during the Little Rock crisis,<sup>55</sup> set the example. Colonel Mirabeau Cooney,<sup>56</sup> in *Journey to Shiloh*, with his white goatee beard, white hat and clothes is the epitome of the image of the southern planter. But the soft-talking, easy-going exterior masks the other side of the South, its falsity and hypocrisy. He is not a colonel – 'that's an honorary title' he says. When the Texans rescue Samuel, a runaway slave, Cooney gives his southern word of honour that he will see that Samuel is returned to his rightful owner, with only a 'lick or two' with the whip to 'make an example of him' as

field-hands are too valuable an investment to mistreat severely. But, once handed over to the sheriff, Samuel is hanged.

The Confederate, Lee Travis, in *Arizona Bushwhackers* (1968), is let out of prison to help clean up a western town, which has a crooked sheriff.<sup>57</sup> Travis takes advantage of the trust placed in him by spying for the Confederacy. Even white women are no longer respected as symbols of purity. In *A Time for Killing* (1967), the fiancée of a Union officer is taken hostage and raped by a Confederate captain. There is a similar occurrence in *The Scavengers* (1969) with both a white woman and her African American servant raped and a Union soldier tortured. A southern entrepreneur, in *Gunfight in Abilene* (1967) grows rich and powerful during the Civil War and ends up corruptly dominating his town and expanding his influence through violence and by appointing and controlling the law officers. There are positive images of southerners but Hollywood continued to change its former pro-southern bias to a much more pro-North view of the Civil War.<sup>58</sup>

In this last cycle of Civil War films there are few northern villains. Apart from the banker in *Invitation to a Gunman*, whose demise at the end of the film is welcomed by all the townspeople, and a Union sergeant in *Mosby's Marauders* (1967) there are only two northern villains of consequence - in *Rio Lobo* (1970) and in *The Beguiled* (1970). *The Beguiled*<sup>59</sup> is a Gothic black comedy in which a wounded Union soldier, McBurney, is taken in by a small private seminary for ladies, a 'mansion full of malignant magnolias,'<sup>60</sup> in Louisiana, and nursed back to health. The film establishes a familiar theme – northern power against southern ingenuity and determination. McBurney's relationship with each of the women and their response violates all the conventions that surrounded the southern view of the pure, inviolate woman. However he goes too far and the women poison him - but not before he has exposed the falseness of this Lost Cause myth. The only person to resist his charm and maintain her dignity throughout is Hallie, the African American housekeeper who, in effect, organises the whole seminary. Unlike Mammy, in *GWTW*, Hallie confidently asserts that she doesn't like being a slave and ironically comments that 'you white folks only killing each other 'cause you care about us niggers.' Civil War films rarely discussed the causes of the conflict or mentioned slavery. Now, like Benjie in *The McMasters*, African Americans could be assertive. Legislation and Black Power had given them confidence yet Nixon was actively slowing down school integration, agreeing with Daniel Moynihan that the 'issue of race could benefit from a period of benign neglect.'<sup>61</sup>

Apart from cowardice, which had been an early theme in Civil War films and only addressed in later years by *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951), treachery is probably the other most heinous crime in war. This forms the basis for the plot in *Rio Lobo* in which Confederates rob trains that carry Union gold, with uncanny regularity, and the only way they could do this is with inside information. After the war the Union colonel, who had been in charge when these robberies occurred, teams up with the Confederates, who had been stealing the gold, to hunt the traitor. 'What you did,' says the colonel to the former Confederates, 'was an act of war, but selling information, that's treason – rotten treachery money.' The traitor is finally revealed as one of the colonel's former sergeants. Patriotism in 1970 was being contested over the Vietnam War with those families and politicians who supported the war seeing opposition to it as un-American and tantamount to treachery. *Rio Lobo* may have brought former enemies together to fight a threat to American values but this previous Hollywood approach to resolving the Civil War was on the decline – more films were ending without reconciliation than with. In some films the ending resolved the conflict between North and South (*Incident at Phantom Hill* (1966), *A Time for Killing*, *The Beguiled*), or between former Confederates (*The Desperados*, *Cain's Cut-throats*). However, in *The McMasters* there is no end to the racial hostility while in *Buck and the Preacher*, although the African Americans succeed in fighting off the white bounty hunters, their future safety remains in doubt.

This move away from reconciliation reflected the upheaval in America in the late 1960s as the liberal consensus collapsed. The battle over civil rights had stirred America's conscience and channelled the frustrations of the young towards a more idealistic vision of the future. Many too were inspired by Kennedy's vision for America – 'Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.' They moved from civil rights to free speech and a more open and democratic society to opposition to the war in Vietnam. They gradually established a counter-culture, which rejected many of the sacred values that had 'made' America – hard work, family, patriotism, the free market – for one of communitarianism, peace, free love and drugs. Those who could evaded the draft. Against this demand for change and renewal were ranged the conservative forces of anti-communism, the religious right and many white working class families in the North, who felt threatened by the speed of change. At the same time the Civil Rights Movement moved leftwards, with King openly supporting the opposition to the Vietnam War and

moving the civil rights agenda to a critique of the failure of the free market system to guarantee American citizens the promise of improvement. It was these fears and developments upon which Nixon built his election campaign in 1968, bringing together the 'silent majority' and ending the liberal consensus.

### **From Cuba to Vietnam**

Many of the major Civil War films of this period used the Cold War to explore America's racial and political problems. *Rio Conchos* was a representation of Kennedy's struggle with Cuba, the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs and the missile crisis of 1962. In the film, a former Confederate Colonel Theron Pardee (Castro) had established a base in Mexico (Cuba) from where he could launch a strike against America using a stolen consignment of the newest repeating rifles (missiles) that he had acquired through his contacts in the United States (communist agents). An undercover operation (CIA) was organised – Union captain, African American sergeant, a Confederate major and Mexican gambler – which finds and destroys Pardee, his base and the rifles thereby protecting America from the threat of invasion. As in the World War II platoon movies, America had triumphed through the gradual respect that developed among this multi-ethnic group – although this time reflecting a more realistic composition of the nation. Nevertheless, this positive image of American intervention soon changed when Johnson ordered a rapid escalation of America's involvement in Vietnam, following the Gulf of Tonkin incident, days after he signed the Civil Rights Act into law in 1964.<sup>62</sup>

Opposition to the Vietnam War came initially from university campuses,<sup>63</sup> but Hollywood was already reflecting America as a 'violence-prone nation' embarking on 'prolonged and meaningless wars' with their 'dehumanising and destructive impact.'<sup>64</sup> *Major Dundee* (1965) was about 'individual and imperial hubris' in which a 'proud and wrong-headed' authoritarian's pursuit of three kidnapped children by Apaches 'leads to international confrontation.' Major Dundee leads a mixed force of Americans – Union, Confederate, African American, Mexican, Native American, Irish and Nordic immigrants – across the border into Mexico. The composition of this force extends the concept of inclusiveness, and examines the issues, to resemble the America of the 1960s. Like the 'platoon' movies it is only towards the end of the mission that there is any resemblance of a unified command. Before that there is racial conflict, bitterness between North and South and



disregard for American values, all reflecting the upheaval and polarisation of American society in the mid-1960s. The Apaches (Viet Cong) prove difficult to find. 'How can we catch the wind or destroy an enemy we never see?' asks the young bugler, Ryan, in a prophetic comment on America's military involvement in Vietnam. The Mexican villagers (South Vietnamese) are initially liberated but then punished by the French (Soviet Union) when the Americans leave. There are no winners in this war. Most of the expeditionary force is killed.<sup>65</sup> Dundee is a figure like Johnson, as determined as Johnson was in his fight against communism. To Johnson, Vietnam was just like the Alamo, retreat was no option.<sup>66</sup>

Retreat was just what happened in *The Undefeated* (1969), foreshadowing Nixon's plan to negotiate America's military withdrawal from Vietnam. A group of Confederates and their families leave the South after the Civil War to go to Mexico to fight for the imposed Emperor Maximilian (General Thieu)<sup>67</sup> against the popular backed resistance of the Juaristas (the Viet Cong). At the same time a former Union officer and the men he led plan to make some money by selling horses to the federal army. When the price offered is considered too low they agree to sell instead to Maximilian but have to drive the horses into Mexico to get paid. This is a remarkable comment on patriotism and American democratic values when profit is considered more important than supporting one's own army and helping an imposed dictator to enslave another nation just after freeing four million slaves in your own. The Confederates are captured by the Juaristas, but they are offered their freedom in exchange for the horses. The Union men agree – they are Americans after all - and Union and Confederate return home together to restart their lives. Reconciliation is further cemented with the Union colonel due to marry the Confederate colonel's sister-in-law.

This vision of fighting the enemy in the open and coming to a mutual understanding at the end was very different to the reality of fighting the Viet Cong, who fought against superior firepower with great cunning. America did not understand their motivation, and saw them only as communists, as the alien 'other,' who had to be destroyed no matter what the cost. Yet they were an illusive enemy who made daring incursions like the Tet offensive of 1968. The train robbery at the start of *Rio Lobo* (1970) echoes the Viet Cong's ability to strike at the heart of American power with great ingenuity and then melt away. In *The Beguiled* (1970) America's pejorative view when fighting non-whites is exposed.

McBurney, even though he is wounded and reduced to one leg seeks to use his sexuality (firepower) to dominate the women (Viet Cong). He uses Nixon's divide and rule tactic by approaching each of the women separately, judging that their pride and personal feelings will prevent them from comparing notes and uniting against him. The 'weaker' party, however, wins through subtlety and imagination and McBurney is killed by his own weakness. McBurney had underestimated them just as Johnson, Nixon and the American military underestimated the North Vietnamese.

As the Vietnam War escalated so the anti-war opposition grew. Many Americans, especially African Americans, wondered why the American government appeared more concerned with freedom in Vietnam than freedom at home. They questioned the whole basis of a war that few understood and many considered immoral. When the Texans in *Journey to Shiloh* set out to travel to Richmond they believed in what they were going to do: they were going to fight for the South in the war. They were on an epic journey of innocence to experience travelling through 'regions of increasing moral complexity.'<sup>68</sup> On the way they meet their first African American who turns out to be just like them and committed to the South. They experience duplicity from those in authority in the person of 'Colonel' Cooney and again when they are tricked into enlisting into the Confederate army before they reach Richmond. Before the battle of Shiloh they realise that they have not got anything 'against these Yankees' (Viet Cong) nor have they seen any of them. They wonder why they are fighting.

Buck: It's war, we're Southerners we've got to fight, it's a matter of freedom.

Miller: Whose freedom? Like the slave we took in.

Buck: He run away to be free. Is that why we're here – to be free.

Miller: Lots of things don't make sense. Now we're getting ready to go to a battle we don't know anything about – not even why.

Johnson was justifying the war by fighting for the freedom of the Vietnamese yet many of the soldiers felt that freedom began at home. As the young Texans died so did the American troops in Vietnam. Buck is the only one left, and even he has lost an arm, ironically because of a southern bullet. He finally returns to Texas muttering 'I know nothing about this damn war.'

The irony of Vietnam was that it was the first war that America fought with a racially integrated army, but the socially biased nature of the draft meant that African Americans were four times more likely to be drafted than white Americans<sup>69</sup> and 'to die in extraordinary high proportions.'<sup>70</sup> Although Gabriel, in *Shenandoah*, fights for his freedom and for the freedom of all African Americans, the white Anderson family do not wish to get involved in a war that 'is not mine.' They have no reason to fight for something they 'don't believe is right.' So the family declares neutrality opting out of any moral obligation to society until they are directly affected by the war. They had adhered to the American values of hard work, independence and family but not sufficiently to the principle that all men are created equal and that that principle was worth fighting for.

Whilst the Andersons opposed the war out of self-interest, others did so on principle. Students announced that they would not join the armed services if drafted, many left for Canada and some publicly burnt their draft cards.<sup>71</sup> Those who supported the war and saw their sons killed or wounded called the resisters agitators and communists and turned against the liberals who supported such un-American activity.<sup>72</sup> But being against the war was not an easy option. Ashby Gatrell, a conscientious objector, in *No Drums, No Bugles* (1971), hides out in a cave for three years. Sometimes he overhears conversations, as this one between a father and son.

Father: This here war don't make much sense to me.

Son: I don't much like the idea about shooting at somebody....but I ain't turning traitor....that's what the law calls him (Ashby).

Father: You reckon it don't take guts to say 'no I ain't going to do it.'

Ashby has to confirm and reconfirm his principles – 'a man can stand by what he feels is right' – as he has given up his home, wife and child. Like the civil rights workers there are principles to uphold and sacrifices to be made on the way to freedom. 'The whole world is going to be free' Ashby says when he overhears that the war has ended. He comes down from the hills but finding his house deserted he goes towards the church as the bells are ringing. 'Nobody wins,' he says, 'I didn't kill.' Ashby falls to the ground and dies - just as Lincoln was killed at the end of the Civil War, just as the African Americans saw freedom snatched away and as the fight for justice and equality faltered in America in the late 1960s.

Most reviewers were sympathetic, seeing the 'obvious relevance to our own days.' It is a 'different and effective approach to the contemporary draft-card burning pacifism' of those 'resisters who have abandoned not only their families but also their citizenship to escape participation in a guilty war.' Only the *Wall Street Journal* defended the 'my country right or wrong' philosophy by suggesting that Ashby, by isolating himself from the 'human community, from its demands and responsibilities (no matter how misguided they may have seemed) he has in fact deprived himself of his own humanity.'<sup>73</sup> In fact during the film Ashby learns to respect every living creature – he shies away from killing a rattlesnake and chases off a bear with 'no hard feelings.' The *Journal's* view echoes the conversation of some returning soldiers, which Ashby overhears: 'I done what I was told to do like the rest of you,' says one. 'Well we all done what we was told,' says another. 'Well there was some that took to liking it too much,' says a third. Vietnam was a different type of war to the past. Young Americans became brutalised, disillusioned and took to drugs. Their inability to distinguish friend from foe led to massacres such as occurred at My Lai as America intervened to defend its view of 'freedom.'

While *No Drums, No Bugles* approached the issue of the draft from a principled objection to war, *Bad Company* (1972) reflected the 'radical disenchantments that have shaken America during the last decade.'<sup>74</sup> The film centres on Drew Dixon, a young boy from Ohio who is to be conscripted into the Union army. His parents do not want to lose another son in the war and so hide him from the recruiting officer. They then send him west to escape the war and make his fortune. He meets up with other youths, also uprooted by the war. They are forced to live in a world where survival is the bottom line, moral principles have no place and success is an illusion. In a period when not supporting the Vietnam war was considered unpatriotic and a crime by many, and the alternative life-styles of the young were condemned, reviewers of the film were supportive. 'The drop-outs of recent times, it seems had their sensible predecessors,' commented *Films and Filming*.<sup>75</sup> 'With tongue in cheek and inevitable allusions to the contemporary scene,' wrote Edwin Miller in *Close-up*.<sup>76</sup> Pessimism and lack of hope pervades the film as the group fall under the power of an 'hypocritical American entrepreneur....whose blinding obsession with money motivates everything' and they meet a settler returning East who has found that 'the west is not a land of promise.'<sup>77</sup> *Bad Company* not only debunked the 'assorted myths of the Old West' it also continued the questioning of the 'glories of patriotism' as well.<sup>78</sup> In fact



unquestioning patriotism was no longer a box office draw as *The Green Berets* (1968) - the only film to support America's military involvement in Vietnam made during the war - demonstrated.<sup>79</sup>

### **The end of the cycles**

In the early 1970s Hollywood lost interest in the Civil War. No films were produced after 1972 until *The Outlaw Josey Wales* in 1976. This was the longest period since 1908 without a Civil War film and marked the end of Hollywood's Civil War cycles. During these years the Vietnam War ended, Nixon was humiliated and forced to resign over Watergate and America began a reassessment of its values prior to the bicentennial celebrations in 1976. It was also a time of fundamental change in Hollywood.

Why did this cycle of Civil War films end in the early 1970s? A major factor must be the demise of the Civil Rights Movement. The coalition that Martin Luther King Jr. had held together splintered after 1965 with the more radical groups pressing not only for black-led solutions requiring radical changes to society but also to separatism rather than inclusion. Whatever moral authority remained soon evaporated after King's assassination in 1968, shortly followed by that of Robert Kennedy, events from which the Civil Rights Movement never recovered. Attempts to resolve issues over housing and employment in the north brought opposition into the open from white, working-class groups who also saw urban rioting by African Americans as a threat to law and order in their neighbourhoods. Their fears were shared by middle-class whites, who had escaped to the suburbs to avoid this, and were further angered by court orders to integrate schools through bussing.<sup>80</sup> America was a society ill at ease with itself and Civil War films about disunity could only mirror what was going on.

Nixon harnessed these fears and attitudes into his southern strategy. He embraced the 'silent majority' rallying behind 'law and order' and slowed down and reversed civil rights reform. He divided the African Americans, and divided them from liberals, by advocating his own version of 'black power,' which he defined as 'black capitalism.' He introduced federally mandated guidelines for affirmative action to out-manoeuvre the Democrats and divide them from their union support.<sup>81</sup> Nixon saw in the development of the new high-tech industries in the Sun Belt, with its evangelical Protestantism and 'political and cultural

conservatism,' as a natural ally for the Republican Party.<sup>82</sup> The students and radicals opposed to his policies found political opposition making no headway. Many withdrew from political activity seeing the counter-culture as the only way ahead.<sup>83</sup> Radical groups were harassed out of existence. According to Theodore White, by '1973 it was clear that the political passions and polarisations of the 1960s had died, replaced by a general sense of political alienation and apathy.'<sup>84</sup>

Nixon's policy of détente with the Soviet Union and China reduced the Cold War temperature and a gradual withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam not only reduced the anti-war opposition but also removed a significant area of social commentary. As Nixon finally negotiated America out of Vietnam it was seen and felt to be a defeat. In Civil War film terms this was a defeat for both North and South and therefore there was no room for reconciliation or unity. Withdrawal from Vietnam helped to kill off the Civil War film.

At the end of the 1960s Hollywood was suffering from severe financial problems and the conglomerates, which now dominated the industry, were looking for guaranteed profits from their investment.<sup>85</sup> Civil War films were not doing this even with major stars like John Wayne. Many of the directors who had produced Civil War and western movies over the past forty years – for example John Ford, Anthony Mann, Jacques Tourner, Raoul Walsh, Budd Boetticher, Lesley Selander - were ending, or had ended, their careers.<sup>86</sup> The western, in decline since the late 1950s, also lost its appeal as the genre's assumption of 'American invincibility, innate righteousness and God-guided national destiny' was exposed in Vietnam and the events of 1968.<sup>87</sup> There was also competition from the Italian 'spaghetti' westerns using American actors and set in the Civil War era.<sup>88</sup> The new studio bosses sought to emulate the success of films like *The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967 and the inexpensive yet runaway success of *Easy Rider* (1969). They encouraged young directors who would be able to connect with the young audience - approximately half of whom were now under twenty-five. These directors, the products of the early film schools, had other interests and wanted to exploit both the techniques they had learned and the new technologies now available. The young were enthusiastic when films related to them or subverted authority and tradition. It was the young who were 'driving the national resurgence in film attendance.'<sup>89</sup> Even the success of the Blaxploitation movies, could not be transferred to Civil War films as Blaxploitation reversed black/white relationships and

this would be unlikely to appeal to white audiences. Furthermore, recent Civil War films had not been box office successes and Hollywood considered the subject had lost its appeal. This was underlined when, *Tara*, the sequel to *GWTW*, commissioned by the Mitchell estate, failed to interest Hollywood.<sup>90</sup>

For decades the Civil War movies were about conflict and reconciliation by white Americans but the social conscience films of this last Civil War cycle had pushed the narrative away from the genre's more familiar plots. Because of the high profile of the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans had figured more prominently than before, but the political climate was changing to a more conservative outlook. This can be seen in the re-releases of *GWTW* (1967, 1971, 1974) and *Song of the South* (1972) and a renewed interest in the Ante Bellum period. However these new 'plantation' films, while reversing the previous African American stereotypes, emphasised sex and violence and distorted representations in the same way that D. W. Griffith had done.<sup>91</sup>

Hollywood's battle with television came to a resolution during the 1960s when it was recognised that accommodation with the new medium would be in its best interests. Hollywood could obtain income from making television programmes and commercials, selling the companies older, and earning rental from newer, films.<sup>92</sup> As Hollywood's interest in the Civil War waned television's interest increased. That interest started in the mid-1950s with the occasional documentary programme and post-Civil War western series like *The Gray Ghost* (1957) and *The Rebel* (1959). This increased in the 1960s because of the centennial with a few 'made-for-television' films, e.g. *Johnny Shiloh* (1963) and *Andersonville* (1966). In the early 1970s interest in the western series was reducing and new subjects were being sought. The Civil War was a familiar area and could provide a whole range of narratives. Unlike recent Hollywood films, television's Civil War productions had not been linked to Vietnam. It was therefore unlikely to put off sponsors. Furthermore the social turmoil caused by the Civil Rights Movement and the radical groups had dissipated. America had accepted the civil rights agenda and it was safe to be more inclusive. 1974 saw *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, which traced the history of an African American woman from slavery to the 1960s and a television remake of *The Red Badge of Courage*. In the last quarter of the twentieth century it was television, not Hollywood, that looked at the Civil War.

By the early 1970s, Hollywood's options for producing Civil War films were limited. For three decades the Civil War had been used to address race, civil rights and national identity. America had sought to resolve these in its legislation of the mid-1960s. However, the war in Vietnam had destroyed the social programmes essential to that process and created further disunity in the country. The influence of the Civil Rights Movement faded as its coalition fractured and Vietnam became the centre of opposition. Hollywood, entering another major financial crisis in 1969, sought different solutions with younger directors to woo younger audiences. Nixon's Cold War strategy paid off with détente and military disengagement abroad and his appeal to the conservative 'silent majority' at home. Watergate, however, with its abuse of presidential power, made America look to defend the Constitution and the democratic process. As Nixon's role was exposed, television documentaries on Lincoln, the man who had saved the Union and brought about the rebirth of America were being shown.<sup>93</sup> America had to come together to defend its founding principles and its political process. Civil War films were about conflict, what was needed was unity.



- <sup>1</sup> Julius Lester, quoted in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, (eds.), *"Takin it to the streets": A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 561.
- <sup>2</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, *My Hope for America* (London: William Heineman., 1964), 41-52.
- <sup>3</sup> This is a somewhat pejorative term coming from 'black action' films. David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Vietnam, 1970-79* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 259.
- <sup>4</sup> For example, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, John Cassavetes, Roman Polanski and Robert Altman.
- <sup>5</sup> Cook, *Lost Illusions*, xvii, 71. The term 'Hollywood Renaissance' was coined by Diane Jacobs in her 1977 book of the same name and referred to the European-style auteur cinema that prevailed briefly in America from 1967-75, Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994, first published 1975), 322.
- <sup>6</sup> William T. Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance* (New York: MacMillan, 1997), 64. William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1999), 186.
- <sup>7</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham City Jail, quoted in Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 276-8.
- <sup>8</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 273-80; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 169-187.
- <sup>9</sup> Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 273-4.
- <sup>10</sup> Kevin Mattson, *Reviews in American History*, 30 (2002), 663-70.
- <sup>11</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 280-1.
- <sup>12</sup> Among those attending were Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando and Burt Lancaster. Stephen J. Ross, 'When Stars Speak Out: Movie Stars, Politics, and the Power of Audience Response' paper given at the Commonwealth Fund Conference, 26-8 June, 2003.
- <sup>13</sup> Robert Cook, 'From Shiloh to Selma: The Impact of the Civil War Centennial on the Black Freedom Struggle in the United States, 1961-65,' in Brian Ward and Tony Badger, (eds.), *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), 133.
- <sup>14</sup> Martin had gone to argue with the current owner of his farm. The latter however had pulled a gun on him and Martin had shot him in self-defence.
- <sup>15</sup> The racist Mississippi Senator James Eastland called their disappearance 'a publicity stunt.' Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 285.
- <sup>16</sup> Donald Bogle defines pure black bucks as 'big, baadddd niggers, over-sexed and savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh' in *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films, New Third Edition* (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1994, first published 1973), 10-15.
- <sup>17</sup> Clair Huffaker, *Rio Conchos* (Futura Publications, 1975, first published 1958).
- <sup>18</sup> Harry Julian Fink, *Major Dundee* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Gold Medal Books, 1965), 56-7.
- <sup>19</sup> This scene is not in the book.

- <sup>20</sup> Enoch, in *Friendly Persuasion* (1956), asks for, and is given, a gun to help defend the community against the southern raiders, but he is not shown fighting. Rau-Ru in *Band of Angels* is just pursuing white planters who have disobeyed the orders of the Union commander.
- <sup>21</sup> The mixing of white and African American soldiers is an anachronism, as it did not begin to happen until Truman's Executive Order 9981 in 1948.
- <sup>22</sup> Johnson, *My Hope for America*, 35, 43. The Immigration Reform Act overturned the hugely restrictive National Origins Act of 1924 and dramatically changed the composition of future immigration.
- <sup>23</sup> *Loving v. Virginia* (1967).
- <sup>24</sup> Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 281.
- <sup>25</sup> Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*: 145.
- <sup>26</sup> Gary Gerstle, 'Immigration and Ethnicity in the American Century' in Harvard Sitkoff, (ed.), *Perspectives on Modern America: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 287.
- <sup>27</sup> David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 249.
- <sup>28</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, first published 1986), 319.
- <sup>29</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 337.
- <sup>30</sup> Thomas Borstleman, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 194.
- <sup>31</sup> Based upon the novel *Fields of Honor* by Will Henry (1960).
- <sup>32</sup> *Variety*, 15 May, 1968.
- <sup>33</sup> Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 91.
- <sup>34</sup> Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long as They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighbourhoods* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000) reviewed by A. Scott Henderson in *Reviews in American History*, 29 ( March 2001), 119-25; Thomas J. Sugrue, 'Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights and the Reaction Against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964' in Jack E. Davis, (ed.), *The Civil Rights Movement* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001), 65-83; Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 303.
- <sup>35</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 188-200.
- <sup>36</sup> A survey in 1968 for the Motion Picture Association of America found that 48% of the audience was aged 16-24 years. Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 67.
- <sup>37</sup> Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 262.
- <sup>38</sup> Kevern Verney, *Black Civil Rights in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 81.
- <sup>39</sup> For example Sidney Poitier in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *In the Heat of the Night* (1967).
- <sup>40</sup> The Production Code had been replaced in 1968 by a four category voluntary ratings system aimed to protect minors but open to negotiation. Responsibility was now placed with the parents rather than the filmmakers, distributors and theatre managers.
- <sup>41</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, 25 December 1970.

<sup>42</sup> The states of the Old South together with Texas, California, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arizona, Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 383.

<sup>43</sup> Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 232, 268.

<sup>44</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 357-65.

<sup>45</sup> Yasuhiro Katagiri, 'Blurring the Color-Line?: Reflections on Interracial and Multiracial America' in *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel – An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies*, 2000/1. Available from: <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/49thparallel/backissues/issue6/KATAGIRI.HTM> (accessed 11 July, 2003).

<sup>46</sup> Remark made by 'Colonel' Cooney - in *Journey to Shiloh*.

<sup>47</sup> Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 179.

<sup>48</sup> William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* about the slave revolt in 1831 had been published in 1966.

<sup>49</sup> *The Quadroon* (1971), *The Skin Game* (1971), *Drum* (1976) and *Mandingo* (1975).

<sup>50</sup> Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., ' "Burn Mandingo, Burn": The Plantation film in the South, 1958-1978' in Warren French, (ed.), *The South and Film* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 107-16.

<sup>51</sup> J.T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978), 130; Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, first published 1988), 486-7. Other books that explored slave society at this time were: George Rawick, *From "Sundown to Sunup"* (1972); Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *"Time on the Cross"* (1974); Eugene D. Genovese, *"Roll, Jordan, Roll"* (1974); Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (1976); Donald Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977).

<sup>52</sup> Paul Monaco, *History of the American Cinema: The Sixties, 1960-69* (New York: Charles Scribner, 2001), 262. By 1961 forty-eight million homes had television. James L. Baughman, 'The Weakest Chain and the Strongest Link: The American Broadcasting Company and the Motion Picture Industry, 1952-60,' in Tino Balio, (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unwin, Hyman, 1990), 110.

<sup>53</sup> This is an entirely fictional story as Quantrill was mortally wounded in Louisville, Kentucky on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1865.

<sup>54</sup> *Santa Fe Trail* (1940), and *Seven Angry Men* (1955).

<sup>55</sup> Faubus had promised not to create any further difficulties but he then withdrew the National Guard from the high school and left the capital. When the African American children came to register, they were met by a shrieking crowd and no protection was given to the children. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 158.

<sup>56</sup> There is additional irony here as the first part of Cooney – 'coon' - is offensive slang for a Negro.

<sup>57</sup> Lincoln had allowed Confederates to join the Union army to help patrol the west.

<sup>58</sup> In films such as *Invitation to a Gunfighter*, *Mosby's Marauders* (1966) *Gunfight in Abilene*, *Fastest Guitar Alive* (1967), *Arizona Bushwhackers* and *Rio Lobo*.

<sup>59</sup> Adapted from the 1966 novel by Thomas Cullinan.

<sup>60</sup> *Newsweek*, 19 April, 1971.

<sup>61</sup> Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 102; Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 272.

- <sup>62</sup> Johnson called what happened there, 'Aggression – deliberate, wilful and systematic.' Lyndon B. Johnson, *My Hope for America* (London: William Heinemann, 1964), 58. We now know that the 'incident' was provoked by the U.S. activity in the area close to the coastline of North Vietnam and hardly anything happened - if at all.
- <sup>63</sup> The first rally organised by the Students for a Democratic Society in Washington in April 1965 attracted 20,000 demonstrators, Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 324. The figure is 25,000 in Bloom and Breins, (eds.), "Takin it to the Streets," 203.
- <sup>64</sup> John H. Lenihan, *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 47.
- <sup>65</sup> Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 127-131.
- <sup>66</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 274-5.
- <sup>67</sup> Thieu came to power through a military coup.
- <sup>68</sup> Lincoln Kaye, *Release*, 1968 in *Journey to Shiloh* (PCA file at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.)
- <sup>69</sup> 41% from a population of 11%. James Maycock, 'War within war', *The Guardian*, 15 September 2001.
- <sup>70</sup> Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech quoted in Bloom and Breins, (eds.), "Takin' it to the Streets," 230-35.
- <sup>71</sup> In Oakland, over half of those conscripted did not turn up and 11% of those who did refused to serve. In the army by 1970, nearly 70,000 soldiers had fled their duties. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 404-5.
- <sup>72</sup> Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement*, 90.
- <sup>73</sup> *Variety*, 11 August, 1971; *New York Times*, 24 February, 1972; *Wall Street Journal* 10 March, 1972.
- <sup>74</sup> *New York Times*, 19 November, 1972.
- <sup>75</sup> *Films and Filming*, September, 1973.
- <sup>76</sup> Edwin Miller, *Close-up*, 17 December, 1972.
- <sup>77</sup> *New York Times*, 19 November 1972; Lenihan, *Showdown*, 163.
- <sup>78</sup> *Time*, 23 October, 1972.
- <sup>79</sup> Sklar, *Movie-made America*, 335.
- <sup>80</sup> *Alexander v. Holmes County* (1969) – all school districts to abandon segregated school systems at once; *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg* (1971) – bussing was a speedy and effective method for integration; *Keyes v. Denver School District I* (1973) – implementation of city-wide bussing.
- <sup>81</sup> Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 176, 273-4
- <sup>82</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 383.
- <sup>83</sup> 1970 was the last year of mass demonstrations against the war. Six students were killed at Kent State University and Jackson State College. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 406-8; Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 270.
- <sup>84</sup> Quoted in Leonard Quart and Albert Auster, *American Film and Society Since 1945* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2002, first published 1984), 99.



<sup>85</sup> Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 2-14, 71-2.

<sup>86</sup> Sklar, *Movie-made America*, 322.

<sup>87</sup> Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, 138; Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 182.

<sup>88</sup> With films like *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1967), *Kill Them All and Come Back Alone* (1968), *Macho Callahan* (1970) and *Massacre at Fort Holman* (1972).

<sup>89</sup> Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 156.

<sup>90</sup> *Tara: The Continuation of Gone with the Wind* by Anne Edwards was not published as it had been commissioned on the basis that it would be made into a film. Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 103-4.

<sup>91</sup> Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 183-8.

<sup>92</sup> In 1967 Hollywood received \$270 million from television rentals. Television was now a regular secondary market for films. Balio (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television*, 38.

<sup>93</sup> *Lincoln – Trial by Fire* (1973) and *Sandburgh's Lincoln* (1974).

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION: HOLLYWOOD'S CIVIL WAR – PAST AND FUTURE

*The world is white no longer; and it will never be white again*<sup>1</sup>

This study argues that after 1945 the complex inter-action between the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement changed Hollywood's interpretation of the Civil War. In doing so not only were the early myths overturned and, by the late 1960s, African Americans had come centre-stage, but through these films Hollywood addressed the major issues of the time - in particular race relations, civil rights and national identity. These changes in interpretation indicated that present-day attitudes and events were more significant to Hollywood than the historical issues of the Civil War – why it started, slavery and Reconstruction - especially as Hollywood consistently refused to discuss the first two and presented Reconstruction mainly from a southern perspective. Hollywood's history films therefore can be used as documenting American attitudes at the time of production.

Hollywood's interest in the Civil War spanned an almost continuous period from 1908 to 1975, with films clustered in four cycles. These cycles corresponded to, and were influenced by, significant events: the semi-centennial, the Depression, the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. The first two cycles ended with America's involvement in World Wars. After 1945 the situation was more complex as the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement took over America's domestic agenda. From 1975, in the aftermath of Vietnam and with an increasingly conservative agenda at home, Hollywood made very few Civil War films.

#### **Hollywood and its Civil War myth**

Hollywood, in the earliest films, established its own mythical representation of the Civil War, which was based upon the South's Lost Cause romanticism and reflected the views of early twentieth century America about, race and national identity. Sixty years later these myths had unravelled. The plantation had become a symbol of questionable morality that threatened the unity of the nation. Southerners were depicted as violent power-seekers, untrustworthy and bitter racists. The fears of miscegenation and mixed race relationships

had been discredited and overturned. African Americans were seen centre stage earning the respect of even the most unreconstructed southerners. How did this happen?

The changing nature of Hollywood's Civil War myths was linked to America's changing attitude towards race. Up to World War II, Hollywood had presented an unchanged picture of the Civil War and African Americans had made little progress in obtaining their civil rights. In the cause of national unity Hollywood abandoned the Civil War film with its civil conflict and racially demeaning portraits for images of racial inclusion. This continued after the war until this liberal agenda was halted by the anti-communist hysteria in the late 1940s.

Hollywood's response was to relocate Civil War films mostly in the west. But this west was the mythical west that Hollywood had created to show how white Americans had conquered the forces of nature. This naturally excluded the African Americans and allowed the difficult issue of civil rights to fade away. However as the western genre uses the Manichaean theory of opposites – good versus evil, civilisation versus savagery - story lines could not continue to propose that all southerners were heroic and good. Therefore the southerner, freed from the plantation and its Lost Cause myths, developed different character traits. As North 'fought' South in the immediate post-Civil War period, the balance began to change: not all southerners were good, nor all northerners bad.

In the mid-1950s a combination of events significantly influenced Hollywood's attitude to the Civil War. The *Brown* judgement of 1954 changed the racial landscape and gave the Civil Rights Movement national legitimacy and great encouragement. In the same year Senator Joseph McCarthy was discredited and the wave of virulent anti-communism lessened. Joseph Breen, the conservative head of the Production Code Administration, retired and the Production Code was amended to allow issues, such as miscegenation, to be addressed. Hollywood responded with films that looked at the issues of national identity and race and African Americans returned to question slavery.

The continual pressure of the Civil Rights Movement and the increasing violent reaction of southern authorities forced Hollywood to cease its renewed discussion on civil rights and national identity and then to abandon any plans it might have made to celebrate the centennial. Eventually, the pressure brought the commitment from the White House to

proceed with civil rights legislation and Hollywood felt that it could return to the Civil War, and to the Civil War it had left in the mid-1950s. Ten years of harassment, intimidation and murder had made America ready to accept the African Americans into full citizenship and also completed the change of Hollywood's representation of the southern character and the myth of the Lost Cause.

Hollywood has not been just a reflector of popular consciousness but has been ready to engage in the debate. Whilst the causes of the Civil War were generally overlooked, films after 1945 did deal with the contemporary reality of race, race relations and national identity when the climate of opinion seemed favourable. Hollywood began to show a different vision of the Civil War by adapting novels to reflect a more pro-civil rights view.<sup>2</sup> After *Brown* African American roles become stronger,<sup>3</sup> but it was in the last cycle of films that saw the greatest increase in positive roles.<sup>4</sup> Gradually the African American was shown as not only having equal worth to that of a white American<sup>5</sup> but also that he considered himself to be an American<sup>6</sup> and had signed up to American values and the American dream.<sup>7</sup> African Americans were at last seen fighting for their freedom against Confederates,<sup>8</sup> and Confederates had African American wives.<sup>9</sup>

### **The last quarter century: 1976-99**

The middle 1970s marked another discontinuity in Hollywood's Civil War. The need for harmony and unity after the divisiveness of the 1960s did not provide an environment for the characteristic disunity and bitterness of the Civil War. In twenty-five years Hollywood produced only eleven Civil War films – three of which appeared in 1993. The most significant film was *Glory*, which concentrated on African Americans fighting for their freedom in the Civil War. It has not been repeated. Instead Hollywood returned to more familiar territory with films like *Gettysburg* (1993),<sup>10</sup> depicting the honourable, heroic fight between North and South; *Sommersby* (1993) – a remake of *The Return of Martin Guerre* in a southern setting with post-Civil War harmonious race relations; and *Pharoah's Army* (1995), a North/South romance. *Ride with the Devil* (1999) was different. It tried to give a neutral view of the guerrilla warfare between the Jayhawkers and Bushwhackers<sup>11</sup> in the mid-west – although it did so from the (southern) Bushwhacker's perspective – stressing the 'moral ambiguities' of war and the complexities of relationships.<sup>12</sup>



As Hollywood's interest in the Civil War declined it was replaced by television. Made-for-television films, begun in the mid-1960s, had become the mainstay of network television programming by 1970. They were cheap to make and produced substantial profits.<sup>13</sup> These movies were mainly melodramas whose genres included 'historical romance' and 'family melodrama' - both long-associated with Civil War films.<sup>14</sup> Since the supply of Hollywood films was insufficient for the television market, made-for-television films increased and the Civil War provided a familiar setting.<sup>15</sup> The impact of television was underlined when *Roots* was shown in January 1977: the final episode attracted a larger audience than the first showing on television of *Gone with the Wind* (GWTW) the year before.<sup>16</sup> The message of *Roots* was conservative and healing: all families could find solace and identity in family roots. Race appeared to be no longer a problem. All ethnic groups shared the same interests and the same American values.<sup>17</sup>

It was not just that television had supplanted Hollywood in producing Civil War films; Hollywood itself had been supplanted as a separate entity. The combination of corporate mergers and new technology transformed the leisure industry.<sup>18</sup> By the 1980s the motion picture industry was indistinguishable from the television industry. Hollywood had moved from making films to producing entertainment within synergistic conglomerates. *Gettysburg* (1993), for example, was originally made for television but after completion was seen to have such cinematic potential that it was adapted and released as a film. Hollywood and the 'Hollywood film' are no longer stand-alone entities as films have become 'products' and marketing strategies encompass a variety of outlets.<sup>19</sup> The conglomerates also gained access to most of Hollywood's film archives, which included the films on the Civil War era. These are broadcast on the many TV, cable and satellite channels replaying those same myths and with the implied call for unity against the alien 'other' as they had at the time of their original reception.

By the early 1980s the political landscape had changed. This was symbolised by the election of Ronald Reagan, who brought a neo-conservative agenda to Washington and progress on civil rights to a standstill.<sup>20</sup> Reagan restored pride and patriotism to America by returning to the earlier Cold War rhetoric and emphasising individual responsibility and opportunity. Hollywood responded with the *Rambo* and *The Terminator* films – a return to America's military and imperial domination. In this context, films about the Civil War, which pitted American against American and films that emphasised collective civil rights,

would have been counter to the political context. The end of the Cold War, however, saw the removal of a 'pivot' of political dialogue.<sup>21</sup> With the external enemy gone and civil rights seemingly accepted, Hollywood looked again at its recent, and also its more distant, past becoming increasingly interested in historical memory.<sup>22</sup> It was in this environment that the Civil War film began to make a comeback and the second attempt at a sequel to *GWTW*, *Scarlett*, by Alexandra Ripley, became an instant best seller and propelled the original book onto the best-seller list again.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Sesquicentennial: 2011-15**

As America approaches the sesquicentennial, how will Hollywood represent the Civil War? One hundred years earlier audiences saw Confederates going off to war cheered by loyal African American servants. Confederate and Union soldiers fought with honour and were finally reconciled. Southern daughters married Union officers. African Americans were content with their slave status and Reconstruction was a disaster. Fifty years later, with African Americans seeking their legitimate rights and continuously contesting the centennial, Hollywood, with financial success uncertain, withdrew from the celebrations.<sup>24</sup>

In establishing the Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission (CWSC) Congress recognised that America had changed. The CWSC is far less politically dominated than its centennial predecessor with half the membership composed of experts on the period. The language has changed: the Civil War is no longer glorified by 'sacrifice' or 'crisis.' The objectives reflect the change in attitudes and historical scholarship of the last fifty years, which acknowledges that there are still issues to resolve around 'race' and 'civil rights.' The Commission's task in co-ordinating the celebrations is to see that all observances are inclusive and appropriate.<sup>25</sup> The same cannot be said for the southern states, which are again looking back to celebrate the Confederacy.<sup>26</sup>

Academic scholarship from the 1960s has given a deeper understanding of slavery and of the subsequent African American experience. David Blight and others have significantly changed the landscape of the memory of the Civil War from white visions of reconciliation and supremacy to the emancipationist vision of the African Americans. Recognition of the role played by African Americans in the Civil War finally came in the 1990s. The fiftieth anniversary of *Brown* was marked in 2004 and there will be a series of civil rights

anniversaries in the coming years. The infamous acquittals following civil rights murders in the 1950/60s are being reopened.<sup>27</sup> African Americans can look proudly to role models at the very centre of government in such persons as Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. Multi-culturalism and ethnic diversity have been accepted, the army is fully integrated, affirmative action has helped to produce a large and dynamic black middle class and black/white inter-marriage has increased.<sup>28</sup> Many African Americans have returned to the South where thousands have been elected to office.<sup>29</sup> The civil rights legislation had transformed the lives of African Americans and many whites thought that the question of race was no longer relevant.<sup>30</sup>

Yet inequality and discrimination still exist. Most African Americans still live in segregated communities and a disproportionate number remain poor and disadvantaged.<sup>31</sup> New immigrants compete for jobs and housing while the final irony is that the public education system is now more segregated than it was before *Brown*.<sup>32</sup> The beating of Rodney King (1991) by the police and their subsequent acquittal by an all-white jury only confirmed the institutional nature of racism and the continuing racial prejudice of whites. Somewhat disturbing is the growth of neo-Confederate groups across the South.<sup>33</sup>

The Act establishing the Commission notes 'a resurgence of interest in the Civil War' and this interest has seen the development of heritage centres, the preservation of battlefield sites, the tracing of genealogies and re-enactments. But does this interest translate into a better understanding of the past and its relation to the present? While professional historians have changed their views as a result of new research, amateur historians tend to have a more static view of the past and are more concerned with the minutiae of the Civil War than with its outcome. Jim Cullen suggests that the fascination with the Civil War has been a white affair helping to make their past more relevant in an increasingly diverse society.<sup>34</sup>

Since the last cycle ended, Civil War films have done little to suggest that Hollywood will approach the sesquicentennial with a radical agenda. With the exception of *Glory* and *Dances with Wolves* (1990) the films have tended to return to southern romance and a southern perspective – the latest being *Cold Mountain* (2003) and *Gods and Generals* (2003).<sup>35</sup> Even *The Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*) has been added to the National Register of films.<sup>36</sup> David Blight recounts how his script for a film about Frederick Douglass in the

mid-1990s was rejected as the company wanted 'a more romantic story....about the war and women in his life.'<sup>37</sup> The emancipationist view of the Civil War has yet to be exploited but it appears that it can only happen if it is surrounded by melodrama, and, with the sesquicentennial corresponding to the seventy-fifth anniversary of *GWTW*<sup>38</sup> and the hundredth anniversary of *Birth*, will the leisure conglomerates consider a remake of these iconic films? And if so, what perspective will they adopt?

### **Hollywood, history and the Civil War**

Unlike all other events in American history the Civil War has a unique relationship to, and meaning for, America that continues to exercise influence even today. As Hollywood has been a leader in cultural expression for a century, any change in its representation of the past would indicate a change in attitude to the issues that it has been addressing. In considering the Civil War, the issues are clearly race, national identity and the 'unfinished business' – the civil rights of African Americans.

This thesis has argued that the way to use historical films is to go beyond the impasse of the accuracy debate. Twenty-five years ago historians admitted that films could give valuable insights into the past – the feel and metaphor of history - but the filmmakers' reliance upon invention and manipulation to provide an engaging narrative and entertainment, has prevented films from being accepted as having the same status as evidence-based history. Some film historians, like Robert Toplin, have tried to bridge the gap by distinguishing 'good' from 'bad' historical films, by suggesting that filmmakers have to use different techniques in representing the past and that, in assessing them, a different set of criteria than that for written history should be used.<sup>39</sup> As far as this thesis is concerned there is no distinction between good and bad history films: they all contain information that could be useful to the historian. History films should be accepted as historical texts, not in relation to the narrative's historical period, but within the context of their production and exhibition, since films can give crucial insights into the cultural attitudes of the day.<sup>40</sup> Using the past in this way allows the discussion of difficult and contentious issues to be explored in a safer environment.

However, moving away from the accuracy debate should not be taken as a re-entry into the postmodern world of equally valid interpretations. Using film techniques such as 'mixing



genres, presenting odd juxtapositions....[and] creating temporal jumps' – as in the film *Walker* (1987) - or creating fiction as fact, bears little relation to an historical text.<sup>41</sup> Care should also be taken to ensure that reading history films is consistent with the political and social context. We cannot impose a connection with, or an interpretation that links to, the future, if there is no contemporary reference.<sup>42</sup> Films must be sensitive to the period and to the context.

Using this methodology the complex inter-action of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement on Hollywood's Civil War has been mapped. As Hollywood continually reassessed its position in relation to current events significant discontinuities, such as its attitude to the centennial, have been identified. But changes in cultural attitudes and representation do not follow a straight line. They are like a scatter diagram, where the line of best fit indicates the trend. So older representations, though gradually decreasing after 1945, continued alongside newer ones. That is why Hollywood's representation of the Civil War is sometimes contradictory and ambiguous as it reflected the differing influences in tone and effect of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. This contrasts to the period before World War II when Hollywood had maintained a more or less consistent pro-South representation of the Civil War. However while Hollywood picks up the *zeitgeist*, there is a tension between cultural perception and Hollywood's main purpose of profit and entertainment. Hollywood, therefore, see-sawed in its attitude towards events by sometimes following the dominant cultural force - as with the anti-communism in the early 1950s – sometimes picking up early on cultural change – following *Brown* in the mid-1950s and the commitment to civil rights in the mid-1960s – and sometimes following its own course – as at the centennial.

It was World War II that brought civil rights into Hollywood and into the Civil War film but it was the Civil Rights Movement that influenced Hollywood to re-interpret its myths and to admit African Americans into that unique white experience of nation building. The demands of the African Americans for their civil rights in the 1950 and 1960s contrasted sharply with their acceptance of the racial order in the 1900s and 1910s. By the late 1960s African Americans were not only present in Civil War films, as in society, but were shown to share the same American values as whites. The original myths had been overturned. In rewriting its own myths Hollywood was in tune not only with popular culture but also with

those historians who were contesting the more traditional approaches to history and to the African American experience.

Whilst the effects of the Cold War on Hollywood have been extensively discussed by film and cultural historians, surprisingly, they have not dealt in the same manner with the impact of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>43</sup> They do not offer a similar nuanced account and generally only note the main events and outcomes of the civil rights struggle – often in relation to an individual film. The overall context and the place of the Civil Rights Movement in relation to popular culture are overlooked. A systematic approach to Civil War films demonstrates that Hollywood had a cyclical relationship with the genre - see Appendices 1 and 2. Why these cycles start and finish and why there are gaps in Civil War film production is rarely commented on by film historians. Yet from 1945, Hollywood's production of Civil War films closely mirrors the struggle over civil rights. After *Brown* the Civil Rights Movement was reinvigorated and Hollywood produced a number of films that questioned the status and identity of African Americans. But the white backlash leading to violent confrontations in the late 1950s halted these pro-civil rights films and stopped the Civil War cycle. They resumed in 1964 after the Civil Rights Movement had persuaded the Kennedy administration that legislation was the only solution to achieving equality and civil rights for African Americans. In the middle of this period came the centennial celebrations.

Judging by past experience the centennial should have been an era of celebration and profit for Hollywood and especially so, as at the end of the 1950s, Hollywood needed successful films to match the challenge of television and to win back its audience. But Hollywood barely participated – just a dozen films in six years and no blockbuster. Film historians do not seem to notice this hiatus even though the memory of the Civil War became an area of cultural contention. They give no explanation as to why, in a period of national celebration about the most emotive event in American history, and used to such effect by Hollywood in the past, Civil War films should dramatically reduce and then resume again. There is also no overall analysis of why Civil War films ceased in the mid-1970s – yet historians can point to significant events with regard to America's position and image in the world. By not taking a systematic approach, film historians failed to see the cyclical nature of Hollywood's relationship to the Civil War. Historians look for trends and

analyse data into a justifiable pattern of causes and consequences. Film historians seem to concentrate more on the films and do not place sufficient emphasis on the context.

This thesis finishes in the mid-1970s with the end of the last cycle of Civil War films, but the interest in, and the issues of, the Civil War have not gone away. Any future research on the Civil War in popular culture in the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century would be qualitatively different from that of the previous seventy-five. As Hollywood withdrew, television began to realise the full potential of the Civil War. The film industry underwent a further restructuring and filmmaking became just one part of the interests of huge entertainment conglomerates. Nevertheless, the methodological approach adopted in this research can be retained. History films are a rich seam of social information as they reflect, and sometimes challenge, attitudes present in society at the time of their production. It points the way to understanding how America saw and continues to see itself.

- <sup>1</sup> James Baldwin, *Stranger in the Village* (1953).
- <sup>2</sup> In such films as *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947), *Friendly Persuasion*, *Rio Conchos* and *Journey to Shiloh* (1968).
- <sup>3</sup> In *Friendly Persuasion* (1956), *Band of Angels* (1957) and *The Horse Soldiers* (1959).
- <sup>4</sup> In *Invitation to a Gunfighter* (1964), *Rio Conchos* (1964), *The McMasters* (1969) and *Buck and the Preacher* (1971).
- <sup>5</sup> There are few significant roles for African American women.
- <sup>6</sup> Even a 'Southerner' as in *Journey to Shiloh*.
- <sup>7</sup> Benjie in *The McMasters* aspires to owning his own ranch even under the direst circumstances of racial hatred, while the former slaves in *Buck and the Preacher* look for the promised land in the west like white pioneers.
- <sup>8</sup> This began with *Tap Roots* (1948) followed by *Friendly Persuasion*, *Band of Angels* (1957), *Rio Conchos*, *Shenandoah* (1965), *The McMasters* and *Buck and the Preacher*.
- <sup>9</sup> As in *Cain's Cut Throats* (1969).
- <sup>10</sup> This was based on Michael Shaara's book *The Killer Angels* (1974).
- <sup>11</sup> Jayhawkers were anti-slavery guerrillas and Bushwhackers pro-slavery guerrillas in the Kansas/Nebraska dispute over admission to the Union of the 1850s. They continued the conflict, especially in Missouri, during the Civil War.
- <sup>12</sup> There is also one African American who supports the Bushwhackers. Even Quantrill had an African American as a bodyguard. Robert Brent Toplin, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 53-7.
- <sup>13</sup> Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 251-3.
- <sup>14</sup> Laurie Schulze, 'The Made-for-Television Movie: Industrial Practice, Cultural Form and Popular Reception' in Tino Balio, (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 354-9.
- <sup>15</sup> For example: *Little Women* (1978 and 1994), *The Sacketts* (1979), *Beulah Land* (1980), *North and South* (1984-6), *Louisiana* (1987), *The Perfect Tribute* (1991), *The Love Letter* (1998).
- <sup>16</sup> Ronald L. Davis, *Celluloid Mirrors: Hollywood and American Society Since 1945* (Fort Worth, Philadelphia: Harcourt, Brace College, 1997), 206.
- <sup>17</sup> John T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978), 165-8.
- <sup>18</sup> Such as the video, cable television and the CD-ROM.
- <sup>19</sup> The film was just one part of the 'product' which was marketed for theatres, videos, television, CD-ROMs and any other spin-off that was commercially viable. Davis, *Celluloid Mirrors*, 211; Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xi-xiv; Robert C. Allen, 'Writing the Last Chapter of the History of Hollywood,' lecture at University of London, 16 February 2000.
- <sup>20</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 332; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 358.



- <sup>21</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1999), 540.
- <sup>22</sup> With films such as *JFK* (1991), *Malcolm X* (1992), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Amistad* (1997), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *The Patriot* (2000).
- <sup>23</sup> *Scarlett: The Sequel to Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind*. Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 103.
- <sup>24</sup> Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 165.
- <sup>25</sup> HR 687: A Bill 'To establish a commission to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War.' Available from: [thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin) (accessed 4 June, 2005).
- <sup>26</sup> The North Carolina sesquicentennial Foundation states on its website that 'in 2011 North Carolina will commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its participation in the Confederacy and its involvement in the War for Southern Independence.' Available from: [dir.yahoo.com/Regional/U\\_S\\_/North\\_Carolina/Arts\\_and\\_Humanities/History/Civil\\_War](http://dir.yahoo.com/Regional/U_S_/North_Carolina/Arts_and_Humanities/History/Civil_War) (accessed 4 June, 2005).
- <sup>27</sup> In particular those of Emmett Till (1955) and of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman (1964).
- <sup>28</sup> Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 369.
- <sup>29</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 326.
- <sup>30</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 528.
- <sup>31</sup> In 2005 black unemployment was 10.8% compared to 4.7% for whites. Over 70% of whites owned their own homes but less than 50% of blacks. Life expectancy of blacks was six years less than for whites. Blacks were twice as likely as whites to die from disease, accident or murder and three times more likely to be jailed and given longer sentences. The net worth of black households was ten times less than that of whites. Paul Harris, *The Observer*, 9 October 2005.
- <sup>32</sup> Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 328-30.
- <sup>33</sup> Duncan Campbell, *The Guardian*, 18 September, 2000.
- <sup>34</sup> Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*, 196-99. Tara McPherson discusses this in 'Both Kinds of Arms: Remembering the Civil War' in *The Velvet Light Trap*, 35 (1995), 3-18.
- <sup>35</sup> 'The deeper truth of *Gods and Generals* seems too be that the war was the south's 'second war of independence'....that the cause of the war was not slavery but the oppressive power of the central government, which wished to tyrannize over the southern states; that the south only wished to exercise its constitutional right to secede, but was thwarted by a power-hungry Lincoln; that southern patriots were the true heirs of the American Revolutionary generation....that the Confederate cause was noble.' Mackubin Thomas Owens, 'War and Memory: Gods and Generals as History,' *National Review Online*. Available from: [nationalreview.com/owens/owens022503.asp](http://nationalreview.com/owens/owens022503.asp) (accessed 12 December, 2004).
- <sup>36</sup> Melvyn Stokes, 'The Civil War in the Movies,' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 70.
- <sup>37</sup> David Blight, 'The Birth of a Genre: Slavery on Film' *Common-Place*, Vol.1 (July, 2001). Available from: [common-place.org/vol-01/no-04/slavery/blight](http://common-place.org/vol-01/no-04/slavery/blight) (accessed 9 June, 2005).
- <sup>38</sup> The copyright on the book expires in 2011. Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 103.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980) explains why history films reflect their own periods more than representing the past.

<sup>41</sup> Toplin, *Reel History*, 164.

<sup>42</sup> For example Michael Coyne comments that the films *The Alamo* (1960) and *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) prefigure Vietnam. This may be a correct interpretation in hindsight, but in 1960 America was not fighting a war in Vietnam it was only supporting a regime that was fighting a communist insurrection. Most Americans at the time, writes William Chafe, 'in and out of government still believed that South Vietnam represented a model of success....the cornerstone of freedom.' Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, 105; Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 263.

<sup>43</sup> Most books on Hollywood in the forties and fifties discuss the effects of the HUAC inquiries on the film industry. The discussion on the Cold War on American culture can be found in such books as: George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America: 'A Rainbow at Midnight,'* 1981; Nora Sayre, *Running Times: Films of the Cold War*, 1982; Lary May, *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War*, 1989; Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 1996; Elaine McClarnand and Steve Goodson, *Impact of the Cold War on American Popular Culture*, 1999; Cyndy Hendershot, *Anti-Communism and Popular Culture in Mid-Century America*, 2003; Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium, Television, McCarthyism and American Culture*, 2003.







## Appendix 3

### ESTABLISHING A CIVIL WAR FILMOGRAPHY

Appendix 2 shows the number of Civil War films produced each year by Hollywood, from 1946-75, which, as far as can be ascertained, fit the criteria set out in Chapter I. Appendix 6 lists the films in chronological order. Appendices 1 and 5 do the same for the period 1908-45. Appendix 7 lists the films from 1976-99.

There are a number of problems in establishing a Civil War filmography. The first is that there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a Civil War film. In the early silent days the films focused on the war itself and rarely, until *The Birth of a Nation*, portrayed the Ante Bellum or the Reconstruction periods. With the advent of the Civil War western, most of the films focused on the post-war period and were located away from the South. Some historians talk about the 'Civil War era' and include the various versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the revived plantation films of the Blaxploitation era, while others include only films that involve an historical figure or event. It depends on the focus of the research. A film historian who is interested in race relations may not include westerns – or only those that have Native Americans as the racial 'other' – or a film historian interested in westerns will exclude films where the story is located in the South.

A second problem relates to identifying films that are about the Civil War. Copies of many silent films have been lost and are only known through indirect sources – magazines, letters, memoirs, etc. Use can be made of film reviews to identify films but the name of the film must be known beforehand. The two most comprehensive sources are the *New York Times* and *Variety*. Bound copies of their reviews going back to the early silent days are available in the British Film Institute library.

It was only with the establishment of the Hay's Office in 1922 that some central co-ordination existed across the industry. This was strengthened in 1934 when adherence to the Production Code became mandatory. However even copies of subsequent films have disappeared as there was no policy in Hollywood to retain a copy of each film until the early 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

There is a third problem – that of assigning a film to a particular year. With all films requiring the approval of the Production Code Administration (PCA) a film has two possible dates: the date of PCA approval and the date of first exhibition. Film historians tend not to specify which date they have used although exhibition usually follows fairly quickly after approval. This thesis uses the date of approval, wherever possible, as this fits the argument that films relate to the context of their production.

There are a number of useful bibliographies specifically on Civil War films. Paul C. Spehr produced the first bibliography of Civil War films, *The Civil War in Motion Pictures*, in 1961 to coincide with the centennial and to mark the ‘growing importance of motion pictures as a form of documentation.’ Spehr includes feature films, *actualites*, newsreels, documentaries and educational films. It is a list of information about each film – he gives no commentary other than a brief description of the content or plot if it is a feature film. Jack Spears in his essay *The Civil War on the Screen* (1977) gives a commentary but it mainly addresses the narrative, production, directors and actors although he occasionally comments about the ‘questionable facts.’ Both these bibliographies have surprising omissions. For Spehr it is mainly in the post 1945 period while Spears omits more of the early silent films. When this occurs they have to be cross-referenced against other sources where possible. There are also some discrepancies between them as sometimes the same film is given a different date, film company, director and a slight change in the title. The latest survey of Civil War films is by Bruce Chadwick. His book, *The Reel Civil War* (2001), offering considerable commentary and analysis, covers the whole of the twentieth century, but concentrates on the early silent period and *Gone with the Wind*. It includes a large number of film titles but also contains discrepancies in its detail and information.

Other bibliographical works include Civil War films as part of a wider review. Frank Wetta and Stephen Curley have a chapter on the Civil War film in *Celluloid Wars*, their guide to America’s experience of war. Larry Langman and David Ebner focus on a century of southern films in their *Hollywood’s Image of the South* (1993). There are twenty chapters, including one on the Civil War, while those covering plantation life, slaves and slavery and Reconstruction are equally useful. Michael Pitt’s *Hollywood and American History* (1984) lists over 250 films with considerable detail of the films and including some history and social analysis. A more general cultural overview of the Civil War can be found in Steven Woodworth’s *American Civil War: A Handbook on Literature and*

*Research* (1996) with a section on films and television. Edward Campbell Jr.'s *The Celluloid South* (1981) and John Kirby's *Media-Made Dixie* (1978), integrate literature and film against the political and social context while Kenneth Cameron in *America on Film* (1997) concentrates more on the relationship between narrative and film.

Since the 1960s Hollywood's representation of race has attracted increasing interest and analysis. Three books, which do this and include many Civil War films, are Donald Bogle's *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* and Thomas Cripps's, *Slow Fade to Black* (1977) and *Making Movies Black* (1993). Looking specifically at African American representation these books are a valuable source of Civil War film titles as are those that analyse the iconic American film – the western. John Lenihan's *Showdown* (1980) is particularly useful but any books on this genre will unearth films that are not generally known.

There are a number of glossy film books - the best of which is Roy Kinnard's *The Blue and the Gray* (1996). About eighty films are briefly reviewed in this 'pictorial history' but it contains little, or nothing, of the 'careful analysis of how each movie reflected the period in which it was made' as the dust-jacket claims. It does have a list of Civil War films of the Silent Era (1903-29) in an appendix. In addition there are a number of film and video guides published annually. Especially useful is Halliwell's *Film and Video Guide*, which gives a brief synopsis of each of the films and tries to date them by the year of first showing – 'an onerous and debatable task.' Another guide, *Videhound's Golden Movie Retriever*, covers the same ground and has a useful Category Index, which includes 'Civil War,' 'Civil Rights,' and 'Slavery.' Although it only lists films that are available on video and DVD – unlike Halliwell's guide – more and more films are now becoming available in these formats and therefore makes this guide increasingly useful.

With the development of the internet, access is easily available to detailed data bases and other information about film. Particularly useful is the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) which has details about filmmakers, cast lists, tag lines, genre type, film length and country of origin although synopses and comments on the films are submitted by subscribers. It provides another source to check titles, dates, etc. but also has the same deficiencies as those noted above. Academic and other institutions, especially in the United States, are another sources of films and can be accessed through the internet. Particularly useful are

the Library of Congress and the University of California Los Angeles or any other institutions that are depositories of film archives, for example the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In the United Kingdom the British Film Institute is the main source.

<sup>1</sup> Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 45.

## **Appendix 4**

### **PRODUCTION CODE ADMINISTRATION FILES**

The Production Code Administration (PCA) files are held in the Margaret Herrick Library, which is part of the Center for Motion Picture Study in Los Angeles, under the aegis of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). The files are primary documents containing correspondence between the PCA and the film studios on individual films from 1927 until 1967. The PCA's task was the oversight of all Hollywood films to ensure that they complied with the industry guidelines set out in its Production Code (Code) of 1934. Given that films could not be shown in the vast majority of the theatres without Code approval, the files should reveal the debate between the film producers and the regulatory authority which would touch on the relationship between film and society and issues of the time.

The Code had been established in 1930, following Will Hay's 1927 'Don'ts and Be Carefuls' guidance to the industry. However it was not strictly enforced until 1934 when Hollywood sought to fight off external regulation by the Roosevelt administration and also moved to prevent boycotts, by religious groups, of films they considered depicted low moral standards. The Code was amended several times with a comprehensive review in 1956, which removed or softened almost all of the prohibitions previously included. A further review in 1966 virtually removed the PCA's supervisory power. The PCA was disbanded in 1968.

#### **Production Code Files**

According to the web site of the AMPAS, the files contain 'a variety of material, including film reviews and other articles; correspondence, primarily between the Motion Picture Association of America and studio officials and representatives of special interest groups; inter-office memos and memos 'to the files'; code certificates; analysis charts; synopses; credit sheets; theatre and book reviews; and censor board reports.'<sup>1</sup> Despite this there are problems. There is not a file for every film while the contents of each file varies. Some have a considerable amount of correspondence, others very little. There are very few letters from the studios and those that exist express objections to the way they have been treated in comparison to another film rather than being part of a dialogue with the PCA.<sup>2</sup> The files



mainly contain copies of correspondence sent by the PCA to the head of the studio who had submitted a script for advice and approval. The advice given was both general and specific. Joseph Breen, the first administrator, developed a standard letter format which he sent as the first reply whether a script had been submitted or just an outline. This contained warnings against the explicit sexual depiction of women's bodies, e.g. they should be covered up with no breasts showing, and to tone down violence. There then followed, if a script had been submitted, specific references to events and implications in the script using words like 'omit' or 'prohibited'. Occasionally there would be a recommendation to consult individuals and organisations on religious representation, ethnic and, more often, animal welfare matters – especially the American Humane Association about the way horses would be used.

Over the years the PCA developed an analysis sheet which, by the early 1950s, was several pages long. The analysis sheet covered the details of the production, who the characters were and their nationalities (if the characters were white Americans they were not recorded), as well as a wide range of sociological factors, the cast list and a synopsis. This detail enabled the PCA to measure the film against the guidelines and therefore gave their comments authority. The PCA also consulted other organisations as appropriate. The main ones were the Legion of Decency, the Protestant Motion Picture Council and The Film Estimate Board of National Organisations. Comments from these three organisations were summarised on a pro forma sheet under the headings of 'class' and 'remarks'. The 'class' was a rating – A, B, or C with C representing immorality - and the 'remarks' a single word comment.<sup>3</sup> There are very few of these sheets in the files. Even rarer are summaries of local censor boards and their actions in cutting scenes although sometimes there is just a note of approval. Also included in these files are clippings from newspapers and magazines.

### **Clippings files**

The library has a parallel set of 'clippings' files, which contain mainly film reviews but has some pre-production information. Some of these 'clippings' files include information on micro-fiche. There are also articles on individual films, as for example the serialisation of the Lillian Ross book *Picture*, about the making of *The Red Badge of Courage* in the *New Yorker* magazine.<sup>4</sup> Whilst many of these files contained a large number of reviews the

majority were from local papers, in the Los Angeles area, industry papers and journals and only a few national papers and journals. The coverage, therefore, was limited and excluded vast areas of the United States and especially the South. Therefore a comparison of popular reactions to Civil War films in different parts of the country is not possible. However, it is possible to look at the relationship of the concerns and comments of the PCA to those of the reviewers.

### **The Production Code in Action**

The comments in this section refer only to Civil War films as identified in Chapter I.

The two main concerns of the PCA were sex and violence. The term sex can be broken down into a number of categories. The main ones were those of revealing parts of a woman's body, nudity, open-mouth kissing, adultery, affairs, prostitution and any statement or any scene that might have a sexual implication – very often referred to by the PCA as 'innuendo' - whether it was direct or just implied. The sensitivities of the PCA were so strong that it led to such prohibitions as in *Border River* (1953) where the Mexican General Calleja could not put a ring in the bodice of his mistress<sup>5</sup> or to the sexual implications of the words 'food' and 'breast' in *The Horse Soldiers* (1959).<sup>6</sup>

The problem of prostitution and prostitutes exercised the PCA even more. They were concerned that women should not be identified as prostitutes nor should the places where they worked be seen as bordellos - as for example in *Raintree County* (1957).<sup>7</sup> Even as late as 1965, when the Code was almost meaningless, the PCA was insisting that prostitutes should not talk about wedding rings.<sup>8</sup> The other area where the PCA was particularly and consistently unrelenting was the implication or overtness of sexual perversion. This is seen in the suggestion of incest, in *Another Part of the Forest* (1948); in Susanna's request to be whipped and in her hysterical excitement during the smashing of the dolls which leads on to 'sexual intimacy' in *Raintree County*; and the demand that 'queer' should be changed to 'quitter' in *Advance to the Rear* (1963).<sup>9</sup>

When it came to the inclusion of violence the PCA was concerned that this should be as limited as possible, despite the underlying nature of the narratives located during or just after a bitter civil war and with many situated in the 'uncivilised' west. Apart from the general nature of violence its concerns included specifically brutality, gruesomeness, and

killing. There were two other areas, which come into the category of violence but which can be treated separately - they are lynching and violence against women.

Lynching is an illegal act of murder and the Code had set out to uphold the best values of society and to be 'responsible for direct moral progress' presenting 'correct standards of life..... subject to the requirements of drama and entertainment.'<sup>10</sup> The PCA was very well aware of how America was perceived throughout the world through its representation in Hollywood movies. 'All countries' states Raymond Moley, 'now recognise the immense power of American motion pictures in advertising all sorts of American products.'<sup>11</sup> One of those 'products' was the American way of life, which included the democratic process and respect for law and order. In the second half of the 1940s this took on a political as well as a moral dimension with the start of the Cold War and the demonisation of the Soviet Union with its undemocratic totalitarian government. The PCA therefore took every opportunity to ensure that the rule of law was upheld and to protect the integrity and position of law officers: lynching was seen within this context. In *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* for example the PCA stated that 'lynching must be in the context of due process of law' and, in *The Woman They Almost Lynched* (1953), that the lynching should become a hanging – 'an authorised execution.'<sup>12</sup> Yet the PCA's moral perspective also seemed to be driven by other considerations. In 1947 Joseph Breen wrote to Harry Cohn that '(f)rom the viewpoint of political censorship, please protect yourself regarding these scenes with the nooses.'<sup>13</sup> Three years later the advice was to remove the direct representation of lynchings to an off-camera occurrence otherwise the 'local boards would delete' the scene.<sup>14</sup>

There were similar comments in 1956 but they were addressed more to commercial considerations at a time when Hollywood was trying to reposition itself to meet the challenge of television and the changing nature of the cinema audience. The overseas market, the PCA said, would delete any lynching scene<sup>15</sup> and the overseas market had by 1953 overtaken the domestic box office returns, accounting for 60% of the total.<sup>16</sup> Altogether seven films had lynching as part of the narrative – the last one being in 1956 which was the year after the Emmett Till murder and in the middle of the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama.

Violence towards women had not been specifically identified in the Code or in any of the amendments. The first mention was in 1949 when Warner Brothers was warned about

excessive violence and ‘especially to women.’<sup>17</sup> In the mid-to-late 1950s the warnings reflected the concerns for the overseas markets. In 1956 Geoffrey Shurlock tells Col. Jason S. Joy to omit the implications of wife-beating as there is a ‘bad public reaction to scenes of men brutalising women.’<sup>18</sup> One year later he writes to Miss L Buntrock that a ‘shove’ should be substituted for a ‘vicious back-hand blow’ as ‘knocking down women is highly objectionable throughout the world.’<sup>19</sup> However by the mid-60s Hollywood was in a different environment. Despite warning against sadism in the script for *Incident at Phantom Hill* (1966) – namely firing into a dead body – the PCA’s comments to change the ‘pistol-whipping’ of a woman to a knock by hand did not come with any qualification about its possible effect within the domestic or overseas markets.<sup>20</sup> Violence had now become part of America’s daily life in the brutal reaction to the Civil Rights movement, the Cuba missile crisis and the assassination of President Kennedy. Yet the reduction of violence, brutality and gruesomeness was an ever occurring comment by the PCA balanced by the ‘correct standards’ of supporting the law and law enforcement.

Law and order is part of what one might call the moral values that infused the thinking of the authors and administrators of the Code. The PCA condemned narratives that suggested that ‘murders go unpunished’ (*Red River*, 1947), that ‘thieves get away with their stolen goods’ (*Copper Canyon*, 1950), that law officers are ‘killed’ (*Santa Fe*, 1951), that there is ‘justification and glorification of murder’ (*San Antone*, 1953), that a lynching can be justified (*The Woman They Almost Lynched*, 1953) and that there should be far more condemnation of criminal activities (*The True Story of Jesse James*, 1957).<sup>21</sup>

Individual acts that transgressed ‘correct’ social values were also condemned. The PCA wanted O’Meara in *Run of the Arrow* (1956) to make a moral comment before shooting Lt. Driscoll to reduce his agony as he is being skinned alive; Kate, the partner of the notorious and brutal guerrilla leader Quantrill in *Kansas Raiders* (1950), needs to indicate that she has a moral reason – as well as an expedient one - for leaving him; while illicit relationships, adultery and affairs are continually castigated. In *Raintree County* (1957) the relationship between John Wycliff Shawnessy and Susanna Drake before their marriage is condemned as having ‘no sense of moral wrongdoing.’ However the condemnation of ‘illicit sex between the leading characters’ in *Band of Angels* (1957) is overlaid by racism. Their ‘illicit sex’ should be ‘replaced by desire.....[and] because they are master and slave sex should only take place after marriage.’ The treatment is too romantic and there



are 'no compensating moral values as required.'<sup>22</sup> There is no question that the sanctity of marriage – despite the divorce rate – continued to be central to male-female relationships, part of the 'higher types of social life' that the Code espoused. In its only positive comment made about the films under review the PCA praised the dignity of the wedding ceremony in *The Legend of Tom Dooley* (1959).<sup>23</sup> Two years later in *The Wild Westerners* (1962) the PCA was demanding that the divorce be changed to annulment.<sup>24</sup>

The PCA's self-appointed guardianship of moral values extended to semi-philosophical statements such as 'The sun shines only half the time – the other half is night' which was deemed unacceptable because of its 'bluntness' in 1946.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps one year after World War II the PCA felt that positive statements about the future were required. An even starker and more threatening comment - 'war's nothing but legal murder' - was rejected the following year as it conveyed that 'all men who fought in the last war are murderers'.<sup>26</sup> The Cold War was now under way, as was the strong anti-communist agenda. Possibly the PCA did not want Hollywood to appear to undermine the armed services as America squared up to the Soviet Union. Ten years later the PCA objected to 'life wasn't meant to be lived for what's right or wrong' as it was 'bad philosophising'.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps it was felt that this undermined the whole nature of American values, which were under challenge from the godless and immoral Soviet Union. This was underlined by the consistently strong stand taken by the PCA to ensure that the moral centre of the community, the church, and its ministers were protected and portrayed with due reverence.

Comments about irreverence were made in over half the film scripts although the main objections were to the use of words like 'damnyankees', 'Jeez', 'Hell', 'Lordamighty', 'God', and 'damn.' Churches should not be the scene of fighting (*The Raid*, 1954), ministers of religion should not be seen as carrying guns or siding with violence (*The Searchers*, 1956) nor should their characters be demeaned as self-righteous, over-bearing and without dignity (*The Deadly Companions*, 1961).<sup>28</sup> The sensitivities of the religious audience were also considered with comments about the depiction of fundamentalist attitudes in *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (1957) and *The True Story of Jesse James*. However there is no comment about the ex-Confederate officer who returns to his home town as a preacher carrying his guns to get the community's attention (*Stars in My Crown*, 1950) or to the use of an old mission church, in the manner of the Alamo, as a defensive building against the attacks of Mexican outlaws and Indians (*The Guns of Fort Petticoat*,



1957). Presumably defending America from a Christian building gave the defenders added strength and moral superiority to overcome the alien attackers in a Cold War context.

Linked to ensuring the promotion of good Christian images is the PCA's attitude to suicide. There were four films where this is mentioned. In three of these the PCA argues caution so that the 'suicide' should not be seen as a 'glorification' of the act - whether it is the blinded Quantrill coming out of the cabin surrounded by Union troops with his guns blazing (*Kansas Raiders*) or in *Raintree County* with the disturbed Susanna wading into the water in a 'love suicide' knowingly sacrificing herself for 'the two lovers.'<sup>29</sup> *Raintree County* is the last film where there is any comment on suicide.

There is one further area that exercised the PCA considerably in terms of 'moral values' and that was what was termed 'vulgarity'. To the PCA vulgarity was a mixture of offensive words that generally had sexual and semi-religious connotations. For example there was objection to 'we'll drown the bastards' in *Friendly Persuasion* (1956); 'spilling your seed on the majestic Lost Cause' in *Alvarez Kelly* (1966); 'there isn't anything left to trade' in *Tap Roots* (1948); and the term 'nutcracker' for 'saddle' in *Run of the Arrow* (1957).<sup>30</sup>

Most of the 'moral' and 'value' comments are made with regard to films released up to 1957, afterwards there are far fewer - apart from those relating to irreverence. The year 1957, therefore, seems to be a watershed in the PCA's attitude to the implementation and interpretation of the Code. Films released in subsequent years were subject to the revised Code with its 'liberalising' amendments. This can be seen in the PCA's attitude to race. Of the ten films where a comment has been made, only one is after 1957 and that is in the film *Journey to Shiloh* (1968). Four of the films related to African Americans, four to Native Americans and two to Mexicans. Initially the attitude of the PCA appeared to be supportive to the three groups in not wanting to see them demeaned. For the African Americans the comment was always to remove the epithet 'Nigger' as much as possible or, in *Journey to Shiloh*, to see if 'darkies' was 'offensive to colored people generally.'<sup>31</sup> For the Native Americans it was to tone down the brutality and for the Mexicans not to make them look like buffoons, as in *Horizons West* (1952). On one occasion, in 1950, the PCA referred the producer to the Association of American Indian Affairs who were 'prominent and serious minded citizens' as the PCA is 'concerned that this minority group is faithfully

represented.’<sup>32</sup> However, this was the only referral to an outside organisation, which might give expert advice on the accuracy of the representation of minority groups. It parallels the general attitude of filmmakers to do their own research and not ask the opinion of those qualified to give a more accurate understanding of context and events. The underlying attitude of the PCA was to go along with the representations of these minority groups, as presented in the scripts, and draw attention only where there appeared to be an excess of brutality.

*The Searchers* gave an interesting insight into their standards of racial norms. During the initial search for the two abducted girls Ethan comes across a dead Comanche. In the original narrative Ethan wants to take his scalp. The PCA objects, calling it a ‘savage act’ – that is something that is done by savages, the uncivilised Comanches, and something no white man would do.<sup>33</sup> Instead Ethan fires two bullets – one through each eye to prevent him entering the ‘spirit land.’ Nine years later firing into a dead body is called ‘sadism.’ – but this is white to white.<sup>34</sup> As *Cue* magazine commented in 1965 when reviewing *Major Dundee* (1964), ‘when an Indian kills it is butchery, when a white officer kills it becomes high adventure.’<sup>35</sup>

The PCA did not comment on the many scenes in films in which African Americans were made to look as if they had no will of their own and were there apparently to provide ‘colour’ or background authenticity. Nor was there any comment on the most stereotypical representations of African Americans in the John Ford film *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953) at which even reviewers were surprised.<sup>36</sup> Yet when it comes to (white) ministers of religion and the church, as has been noted above, the PCA was scrupulous to preserve their integrity and status as culturally important figures and symbols of white civilisation.

### **Film Reviews and Reviewers**

Film reviewers only see the finished product. They are not party to the comments and negotiations between the PCA and the producers and directors. What they see, therefore, may be very different in emphasis, tone and narrative to the original concept. The reviewers form a number of categories of reception, which reflect the popular cultural response to movies: industry papers, local and national newspapers, industry magazines and national magazines. Industry papers such as *Motion Picture Daily* and *Variety Daily*

and local newspapers in Hollywood such as the *Hollywood Reporter* and *Los Angeles Times* not only review the films on release but also give information at the pre-production, production and post-production stages. Other newspapers review the films on release in their area while magazines can take more time and can give a deeper consideration.

Most of the newspaper reviews were concerned with the overall quality of the film, the narrative, the cast and their performance and the technical qualities and did not comment on the ideas or values expressed, nor alluded to the film's relationship to current events. Eighteen of the sixty-six films, which had a PCA file, either had no review material or the reviews did not contain anything more than comments about the quality of the film and a summary of the story. This was far more apparent in the 1960s. The reissuing of the Code in 1956 marked a significant change in the PCA's approach to the many issues it had once tried to control for the public good by banning or severely limiting their representation and discussion. But there were other factors which were seriously threatening the film industry: the rise of television, the fall in theatre audiences, the movement to the suburbs and away from the main theatre concentrations, the increasing influence of foreign films and Hollywood's continuing financial crisis. The films released from 1957, were produced after the landmark *Brown* decision of 1954 changed the racial climate from one of repression, subservience and disregard to the beginnings of recognition and inclusion, while the substantially revised PC enabled a whole range of subjects to be dealt with in a more open and realistic way – the subject of race in its many forms being one. However, from 1960, despite the nationally planned celebrations for the centennial of the Civil War, the increasing racial tension saw Hollywood distance itself from representations of the conflict with a dramatic reduction of films set in that period until 1964. There were also changes in the pattern of comments made by reviewers in these periods.

Although there were comments<sup>37</sup> from thirty-one newspapers and journals the vast majority came from three sources – *Variety* (36), the *Hollywood Reporter* (24) and the *New York Times* (28) – amounting to 58% of all the comments. Next came the *Motion Picture Daily* (10) and the *Hollywood Times* (8). The seven journals contributed only ten reviews. While there were differences in style and approach between the newspapers what was more remarkable, taking the comments as a whole, were the similarities. Unfortunately, the south and south-west were not represented although some comments make reference to whether a particular film would be well received there.<sup>38</sup>

Reference has already been made to the fact that reviewers were not aware of the changes that had been made to the film prior to release. Reviewers however sometimes referred back to, and made comparisons with, the source of the story – normally a novel.<sup>39</sup> Given this different perspective it should not be surprising that the reviewers, in the main, focused on entirely different aspects of the film. On the other hand the reviewers may have been reflecting a popular consciousness that was considerably at variance to, and far more tolerant, than that of the PCA. (The 1950's was of course the era of the Kinsey Report into sexual relations between adults.) Whereas the PCA was concerned very much with representations of sex and illicit relationships, violence in all its manifestations, law and order, irreverence and moral values, reviewers saw and commented on a different set of attributes. These revolved around American identity and American values, the identification of myth and the film's relationship to current events. They also showed a higher degree of popular consciousness in racial comments and in their attitude towards the South.

The one category that both the PCA and the reviewers seemed to share was the one relating to values. However the PCA saw these as moral, while the reviewers saw them as more American, values. The PCA would probably assert that the two are indistinguishable and that they did not need to comment on them as they were shared beliefs and that their role was to ensure that non-American or non-moral values were not shown or glorified in any way. These shared values emerge in the 'plea for tolerance among neighbours' and the 'honest toil, neighbourly love and thrift' in *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947); the triumph of 'good over evil' in *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953); the 'touching display of the nobility of man' and the 'ordered happy lives of simple morality and genuine love' in *Friendly Persuasion* (1956); the indication that the Union soldiers would be hanged - but this is to take place 'off camera' - in *The Great Locomotive Chase* (1956); the show of 'loyalty, devotion and courage' in *The Proud Rebel* (1958); and the display of 'gallantry' in *The Horse Soldiers* (1959).<sup>40</sup>

Just under half of the categories of comments had sufficient numbers to give an indication of reception. What might be called 'conservative,' status quo categories – American values, myth, pro-South and racist comments – fell dramatically and consistently after 1956. Those categories that were more 'progressive' or 'liberal' and in touch with changes



in the political environment – anti-racist, American identity, current affairs, recognition of ethnic actors and, interestingly, reconciliation – all rose after 1957. It appears that the years 1957-59 were the most politically sensitive for reviewers and provided a watershed in their attitude towards Hollywood.

Racist comments were more directed to ‘Indians’ than to African Americans - reflecting the much lower profile of the latter in films until the mid-1950s. In *Tap Roots* (1948), for example, Boris Karloff played ‘an Indian’ though ‘quite a civilised one’; an ‘Indian’ chief provides a ‘comedy moment’ in *Santa Fe* (1951); the ‘Redskins’ are denounced for ‘stupidity’ in the way they attack the beleaguered whites in *Escape from Fort Bravo* (1953); Martin, in *The Searchers*, is called a ‘semi-civilised half-breed’ who ‘in his grief reverts to pure Indian’; and *Run of the Arrow* is called an ‘Indian cruelty pic.’ The first comment regarding African Americans comes in a review of *Friendly Persuasion* by the *New York Times*, which is not a comment but an omission. In identifying the Birdwell family the reviewer includes all the animals who have names, but not Enoch, the African American, who has an intimate relationship with the household but whose status is never described. A year later Sidney Poitier’s role as Rau-Ru in *Band of Angels* is described as ‘a beloved slave who gets fancy notions of brotherhood’ at the same time as Orval Faubus, Governor of Alabama, was denying African American children the right to enter Little Rock Central High School. That is the last racist comment recorded by reviewers up to 1968.

In contrast to the racist comments, almost all the anti-racist comments relate to African Americans. The *New Yorker* points out that despite the fine liberal phrases in *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* about ‘wanting a free country for all folks’ the film does not include one African American. A placid town in the South ‘erupts into racial bigotry’ when ‘greedy townspeople attempt to drive off an old Negro by hiding under the cloak of the Ku Klux Klan’ in *Stars in My Crown*. John Ford is accused of ‘live and let live’ despite the ‘attempted lynching’ of a young African American boy in *The Sun Shines Bright*. Several reviewers note approvingly the ‘racial issues’ raised in *Band of Angels* and the origins of racial consciousness in *Raintree County* whilst, in 1968, *Journey to Shiloh* is seen as an ‘attack on racial prejudice.’<sup>41</sup> In line with the increasing acceptance of African Americans as part of the American nation there is increasing recognition of them as actors. In the period up to 1956 there are only two comments but these are followed by four in 1957-59.



It is in the final period that anti-racist comments with regard to Native Americans appear as they, too, are beginning to gain recognition on the back of the Civil Rights Movement's success. *Cue* magazine's comment has already been noted while *Variety* notes that the 'Yaqui Indians are *for once* (emphasis added) pictured as the good guys.'<sup>42</sup>

Although there was growing recognition of ethnic minorities and their roles and abilities in these films, throughout the period American identity was still seen as white and often emphasised and celebrated in the face of attack from the savage enemy – the 'Indian.' This is seen in *Two Flags West* (1950) where 'intense hatreds' between Northerners and Southerners, due to the Civil War, are 'buried' in their fight against 'a common enemy; 'or in *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (1957) in which a 'group of Southern women are protected by a Yankee'; or in *How the West Was Won* (1962) with the 'sorrow of fellow countrymen at war with one another; and in *Major Dundee* (1965) when the Confederate officer 'changes from having no flag to supporting the Union flag and dying with it.'<sup>43</sup>

Whilst reconciliation of North and South is a strong and continuing theme in the films and is closely allied to representations of American identity, it is only commented on by reviewers in seven films, with the majority occurring between 1957 and 1959. It would seem that there was a move both to reach out to the southern white community in the wake of *Brown* and the consequent resurrection of racial violence, and also to recognise the message of the coming centennial celebrations – that all whites are Americans regardless of the bitterness and hatreds engendered by the Civil War. This view seems to be summed up in the *New York Times* reception of *The Horse Soldiers* that it is 'in centennial mood.....(and is) reflective of the gallantry of that tragic war.'<sup>44</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Available from: [oscars.org/mhl/sc/motionpic-116.html](http://oscars.org/mhl/sc/motionpic-116.html) (accessed 20 April, 2003).
- <sup>2</sup> Letter from Stan Sheptner to Milton Hodenfield 12 February, 1959, PCA file on *The Legend of Tom Dooley* (1959).
- <sup>3</sup> Arlene Hui, 'Liberalising the Hays Code: the Case of *Duel in the Sun*' at a seminar at University of London, 25 October, 2001.
- <sup>4</sup> *New Yorker* 24 May to 21 June, 1952.
- <sup>5</sup> Letter from Joseph I. Breen to William Gordon at Universal, 29 May, 1953, PCA file on *Border River*.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter from Geoffrey M. Shurlock to Walter M. Mirisch (Mirisch Company), 10 September, 1958, PCA file on *The Horse Soldiers*.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter from Geoffrey M. Shurlock to Dore Schary at MGM, 2 February, 1956, PCA file on *Raintree County*.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter from Geoffrey M. Shurlock to M.J. Frankovich, Columbia, 18, October, 1965, PCA file on *Alvarez Kelly*.
- <sup>9</sup> Breen to Gordon, 1 August, 1947, PCA file on *Another Part of the Forest*; Shurlock to Schary 2 February 1956, PCA file on *Raintree County*; Shurlock to Robert M. Vogel, 5 May 1957, PCA file on *Advance to the Rear*. The title of the film at the time of the letter to Vogel was *The Company of Cowards*. Had the release title been known then it is interesting to speculate whether this would have evinced a comment from the PCA!
- <sup>10</sup> Introduction and general principles of the Production Code (1944 edition).
- <sup>11</sup> Raymond Moley, *The Hay's Office* (New York: The Bobb-Merrill Company, 1945), 221.
- <sup>12</sup> Letter from Breen to L. B. Mayer, MGM, 8 March, 1946, PCA file on *The Romance of Rosy Ridge*; letter from Breen to J. E. Baker, Republic Productions, 6 October, 1952, PCA file on *The Woman They Almost Lynched*.
- <sup>13</sup> Letter from Breen to Harry Cohn, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 13 March, 1947, PCA file on *The Man from Colorado* (1948).
- <sup>14</sup> Letter from Breen to Franklin King, King Brothers Productions, 8 September, 1950, PCA file on *Drums in the Deep South*.
- <sup>15</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Meyer Mishkin, 12 June, 1956, PCA file on *Drango* (1957).
- <sup>16</sup> Ronald L. Davis, *Celluloid Mirrors: Hollywood and American Society Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997), p. 61.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter from Breen to J. L. Warner, Warner Brothers, 14 March, 1949, PCA file on *Dallas* (1950).
- <sup>18</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Col. Jason S. Joy, Twentieth Century Fox, 30 August, 1956, PCA file on *Love Me Tender* (1956).
- <sup>19</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Miss L. Buntrock, Allied Artists Pictures Corporation, 16 October, 1957, PCA file on *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958).
- <sup>20</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Kathryn McTaggart, Univesal Pictures Company, 27 January, 1964, PCA file on *Incident at Phantom Hill* (1965).
- <sup>21</sup> Letter from Breen to Howard Hawks, Monterey Productions, 22 August, 1946, PCA file on *Red River* (1948); letter from Breen to Luigi Luraschi, Paramount Pictures, 13 April, 1949, PCA file on *Copper Canyon* (1950); letter from Breen to Harry Cohn, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 27 April, 1950; letter from Breen to J. E. Baker, Republic Productions, 17 March, 1952; letter from Breen to J.E. Baker, Republic Productions, 6 October, 1952; memo for file 19 September, 1956, PCA file, *The True Story of Jesse James* (1957).

- <sup>22</sup> Letter from Shurlock to William Feeder, RKO Radio Productions, 9 April, 1956, PCA file on *Run of the Arrow*; letter from Breen to William Gordon, Universal International, 14 April, 1950, PCA file on *Kansas Raiders* (1950); letter from Shurlock to Dore Schary, 2 February, 1956, PCA file on *Raintree County*; memo for file by EGD, 14 January, 1956 and letter from Shurlock to J. L. Warner, Warner Brothers, 15 January 1956.
- <sup>23</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Stan Sheptner, Sheptner Company, 9 February, 1959, PCA file on *The Legend of Tom Dooley* (1959).
- <sup>24</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Sol Schwartz, Four Leaf Productions, 20 December, 1961, PCA file on *The Wild Westerners* (1962).
- <sup>25</sup> Letter from Breen to Howard Hawks, Monterey Productions, 26 August, 1946, PCA file on *Red River*.
- <sup>26</sup> Letter from Breen to Harry Cohn, Columbia, 21 January, 1947, PCA file on *The Man from Colorado*.
- <sup>27</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Harry Cohn, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 12 October, 1957, PCA file on *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (1957).
- <sup>28</sup> Letter from Breen to Frank McFadden, Panoramic Productions, 16 December, 1953, PCA file on *The Raid* (1954); letter from Shurlock to John Ford, C. V. Whitney Pictures Company, 20 June, 1955, PCA file on *The Searchers* (1956); letter from Shurlock to Charles B. Fitzsimmons, Carousel Films, 10 January, 1961, PCA file on *The Deadly Companions* (1961); letter from Shurlock to Abi Donnelly, Universal Pictures, 22 July, 1966, PCA file on *Journey to Shiloh* (1968).
- <sup>29</sup> Letter from Breen to William Gordon, Universal International, 14 April, 1950, PCA file on *Kansas Raiders*; letter from Shurlock to Dore Schary, 2 February, 1956, PCA file on *Raintree County*.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Miss Lorene Buntrock, Allied Artists, 7 September, 1955, PCA file on *Friendly Persuasion* (1956); letter from Shurlock to M. J. Frankovich, Columbia, 9 December, 1964, PCA file on *Alvarez Kelly* (1966); letter from Breen to William Gordon, 11 April, 1947, PCA file on *Tap Roots* (1948); letter from Shurlock to William Feeder, RKO Radio Productions, 14 June, 1956, PCA file on *Run of the Arrow*.
- <sup>31</sup> *Stars in My Crown* (1950), *Band of Angels*, *Raintree County* and *Journey to Shiloh*.
- <sup>32</sup> Letter from Breen to Hal Wallis, Hal Wallis Productions, 23 June, 1950, PCA file on *Red Mountain* (1951).
- <sup>33</sup> Letter from Shurlock to John Ford, 20 June, 1955, PCA file on *The Searchers*.
- <sup>34</sup> Letter from Shurlock to Kathryn McTaggart, 20 January, 1964, PCA file on *Major Dundee*.
- <sup>35</sup> *Cue* magazine, 4 October, 1965.
- <sup>36</sup> *Hollywood Reporter*, 1 May, 1953.
- <sup>37</sup> The term 'comments' includes one or several different comments in the same review. Occasionally they have been categorised by inference but generally they are the direct statements of the reviewer. Some films too evinced comments from various reviewers, which fitted the criteria for recording. For example there are five for *Raintree County*, seven for *Band of Angels* and five for *Shenandoah* (1965).
- <sup>38</sup> Examples of this are: *Variety*, 20 April, 1955, comments that *Five Guns West* (1955), was 'a fair bill filler for the outdoor market' (i.e. drive-ins); *Hollywood Reporter*, 12 June, 1959, comments on *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) that 'John Ford so stirringly dramatised the valor of Dixie's resistance that the picture should be as popular in the North as in the South.'
- <sup>39</sup> Examples are the *Daily News*, 18 September, 1951, on *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951); *New York Times*, 11 July, 1957, on *Band of Angels*; *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 June, 1959, on *The Horse Soldiers*.

<sup>40</sup> *Variety*, 1 July, 1947 and the *New Yorker*, November, 1947; *Variety*, 6 May, 1953; *New York Times*, 10 February, 1956; *Hollywood Reporter*, 23 May, 1956; *Mirror News*, 18 January 1958; *New York Times*, 26 June, 1959.

<sup>41</sup> *New Yorker*, November, 1947; *Motion Picture Daily*, 1 March, 1950 and *New York Times*, 22 December, 1950; *San Francisco Express*, 30 October, 1953; *Variety*, 10 July, 1957, *Motion Picture Daily* 10 July, 1957, *Hollywood Reporter* 10 July, 1957 and *Los Angeles Times* 8 August, 1957.

<sup>42</sup> *Cue*, 4 October, 1965, *Major Dundee* (1964); *Variety*, 21 July, 1965, *Arizona Raiders* (1965).

<sup>43</sup> *Variety* on *Two Flags West* (1950), 9 October, 1950; *Hollywood Reporter* on *Guns of Fort Petticoat*, 13 March, 1957; *Motion Picture Daily* on *How the West Was Won* (1962), 17 March, 1963; *The New Republic* on *Major Dundee*, 17 April, 1965.

<sup>44</sup> *New York Times*, 26, June, 1959.

Appendix 5

CIVIL WAR FILM EXHIBITION 1908-1945

Year	Film	Director	Company
1908	Barbara Frietchie: The Story of a Patriotic American Woman		Vitagraph
	Battle of Gettysburg, The		Vitagraph
	Blue and the Gray, The	Edwin Porter	Edison
	or, Days of '61, The		
	Charity Begins at Home: A Story of the South during the Civil War		Vitagraph
	Day's of '61, The	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Famous Escape, A	Billy Bitzer	Biograph
	Guerrillas, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	In the Shenandoah Valley		Selig
	Life of Abraham Lincoln, The		Essanay
	Reprieve, The: An Episode in the Life of Abraham Lincoln, The	Van Dyke Brooke	Vitagraph
	Romance of a War Nurse	Edwin Porter	Edison
	Sheridan's Ride		Vitagraph
	Two Brothers of the G. A. R.		Lubin
1909	Adventures of a Drummer Boy		Vitagraph
	Assassination of Abraham Lincoln		Penn Motion P. Co.
	Brother against Brother, A Story of the Civil War		Selig
	Brothers in Arms		Edison
	Bugle Call, The		Vitagraph
	Days of Old Virginia		
	Empty Sleeve: Or Memories of Bygone Days, The	Van Dyke Brooke	Vitagraph
	Escape from Andersonville		Kalem
	For Her Country's Sake		Vitagraph
	Girl Spy: An Incident of the Civil War, The		Kalem
	Honor of his Family, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Hour of Terror, The		World Films
	In Old Kentucky	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Nan, the Girl Spy	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Northern Schoolmaster, The		Kalem
	Old Army Chest, The		Lubin
	Old Soldier's Story, The	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Permanent Peace		Kineto
	Rally Round the Flag, The		Kalem
	Sheltered Under Stars and Stripes		Bison
	Stirring Days in Old Virginia		Selig
	Telepathic Warning, A		Vitagraph
	Two Orphans of the G. A. R., The		Lubin
	Wartime Sweetheart, A		Selig
	Warrior Bold, A		Edison
1910	Abraham Lincoln's Clemency	Theodore Wharton	Pathe
	All's Fair in Love and War		Vitagraph
	Bravest Girl in the South, The	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Brother's Feud, The		IMP
	Call to Arms, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Common Enemy, The	Otis Turner	Selig
	Confederate Spy, The: A Story of the Civil War	Sidney Olcott	Kalem



1910	Corporal Truman's War Story		Kalem
	Daughter of Dixie, A		Kalem
	Dixie		IMP (Univ)
	Dixie Mother, A	Van Dyke Brooke	Vitagraph
	Flag of his Country, The		Thanhouser
	Fugitive, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Further Adventures of the Girl Spy	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Girl Spy Before Vicksburg, The	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Her Soldier Sweetheart		Kalem
	His Yankee Girl		Powers
	Honor of his Family, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	House with Closed Shutters, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	In the Border States	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	In War Time		IMP
	Little Confederate, The (A)		Powers
	Little Lad in Dixie	Rollin Sturgeon	Vitagraph
	Love Romance of the Girl Spy, The		Kalem
	'Mid the Cannon's Roar		Edison
	Nine of Diamonds, The		Vitagraph
	Ransomed (A Prisoner of War)		Vitagraph
	Road to Richmond, The		Selig
	Sheridan's Ride		Edison
	Sleeping Sentinel, The		Lubin
	Under Both Flags		Pathe
	Under the Stars and Bars	G. and G. Melies	Melies
	Veteran of the GAR, A		Lubin
	War	Francis Ford	Powers
	War-Time Pals		Powers
	When Lovers Part		Kalem
1911	Eighteen sixty-one		Selig
	Barbara Frietchie		Champion
	Battle, The	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Battle Hymn of the Republic, The	Lawrence Trimble	Vitagraph
	Blacksmith's Love, The	Francis Boggs	Selig
	Brother's Redemption, A		Lubin
	By a Woman's Wit		Kalem
	Cinderella	Thomas Ince	IMP
	Col. E. D. Baker, 1st California		Reliance
	Colonel's Son, The	Thomas Ince	Kalem
	Copperhead, The		Champion
	Coward, The	Wilfred Noy	Pathe
	Coward's Flute, The	Ulysses Davis	Champion
	Daddy's Boy and Mammy		Vitagraph
	Daughter of Dixie, A		Champion
	Daughter of the South		Pathe
	Driving Home the Cows		Kalem
	Drummer Boy of Shiloh, The		Uncle Sam
	Empty Sadle, The		Vitagraph
	Exchange, The		Champion
	Fifty Years Ago		Powers
	Fighting Schoolmaster, The		Vitagraph
	Flames and Fortune		Thanhouser
	Folks of Old Virginia		Champion
	For Her Sake		Thanhouser
	For the Love of an Enemy		Kalem
	Forged Dispatch, The	Thomas Ince	IMP
1911	Fortunes of War, The	Thomas Ince	IMP
	From Wallace to Grant		Champion
	General Meade's Fighting Days		Champion
	Girl and a Spy, A		Champion
	Grandmother's War Story		Kalem

1911	Grant and Lincoln		Champion
	He Fought for the USA		Essanay
	Hearts and Flags		Edison
	Her Little Slipper Joseph Golden		Pathe
	His Last Parade		Lubin
	His Trust	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	His Trust Fulfilled	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Honoring a Hero		Pathe
	Imposter, The	Lucius Henderson	Thanouser
	Judge's Story, The		
	Lt. Grey of the Confederacy	Francis Boggs	Selig
	Little Lad in Dixie, A	Rollin Sturgeon	Vitagraph
	The Little Rebel	Harry Solter	Lubin
	Little Soldier of '64, The		Kalem
	Little Spy, The		Vitagraph
	Longstreet at Seven Pines		Champion
	Mammy's Ghost		
	O'er Grim Fields Scarred		Reliance
	Old Man and Jim, The		Champion
	On Kentucky Soil		Reliance
	One Flag at Last		Vitagraph
	Perils of a War Messenger, The		Champion
	Railroad Raiders of '62, The	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Redemption of a Coward, The		Champion
	Right or Wrong	G. and G. Melies	Melies
	Rival Brother's Patriotism, The	Leopold Wharton	Pathe
	Romance of Dixie Belle, The	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Romance of the 60's, A		Lubin
	Service Under Johnson and Lee		Champion
	Shenandoah		Champion
	Southern Boy of '61, A		Kalem
	Southern Girls Heroism, A		Champion
	Southern Soldier's Sacrifice, A	William Humphrey	Vitagraph
	Special Messenger, A	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Spy, The	Francis Boggs	Selig
	Sundered Ties	Francis Ford	Bison
	Swords and Hearts	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Tale of a Soldiers Ring, The	Joseph Golden	Selig
	To the Aid of Stonewall Jackson	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	Uncle Pete's Ruse		IMP
	Wages of War, The		Vitagraph
	War and the Widow, The		Champion
	Wartime Escape, A	Sidney Olcott	Kalem
	When North and South Met		Champion
	With Sheridan at Murfreesboro		Champion
	With Stonewall Jackson		Champion
1912	Baby Betty	Richard Garrick	Selig
	Battle of Gettysburg	Thomas Ince	Broncho
	Battle of Pottsburg Ridge, The	Kenean Buel	Kalem
	Blood Will Tell	Walter Edwards	Kay-Bee
	Bluegrass Romance, A	Charles Giblyn	Broncho
	Bugler of Battery B, The	K. Buel/ G. Melford	Kalem
	Call of the Drum, The	Francis Grandon	IMP
	Chattanooga	Carrowcliffe	Feature Films
1912	Confederate Ironclad, The	Kenean Buel	Kalem
	Coward, The	Allan Dwan	
	Darling of the CSA, The	K. Buel/ S. Olcott	Kalem
	Dead Pays, The	Francis Ford	Kay-Bee
	Defender of the Name, The		Rex
	Dividing Line, The	Herbert Brenon	IMP
	Drummer Girl of Vicksburg, The	Kenean Buel	Kalem

1912	Equine Spy, The Warren	Kenean Buell	Solax
	Fighting Dan McCool	Fred Evans	Kalem
	Fifty Years After	Hugh Ford	Kay-Bee
	For the Cause	Bannister Merwin	Edison
	For the Cause of the South		Champion
	Foraging on the Enemy		Nestor
	Fortunes of War		Universal
	Fortunes of War, The		Edison
	Grandfather, The		Vitagraph
	Gettysburg		
	Heart of a Soldier, The	Allan Dwan	Champion
	Heroes of the Blue and Gray		Vitagraph
	Higher Mercy, The	Ranous	Selig
	His Father's Bugle	Richard Garrick	Biograph
	Informer, The	D. W. Griffith	
	Jim Bludso		
	Lie, The	K. Baggot/ W. Daly	IMP
	Lincoln's Gettysburg Address	Thomas Ince	Vitagraph
	Love and War		Majestic
	Love War and a Bonnet	Harry Pollard	IMP
	Loyal Deserter, A		Selig
	Maid at War, A		Bison
	Me and Bill		Selig
	Man's Duty, A	Hal Reid	Reliance
	Medal of Honor, The		Lubin
	None can do More		Rex
	On the Firing Line		Bison
	On the Firing Line		Vitagraph
	On Secret Service	Thomas Ince	Kay-Bee
	Reflections from the Firelight		IMP
	Saved from Court-Martial	K. Buel/ G. Melford	Edison
	Seventh Son, The	Hal Reid	Vitagraph
	Sheridan's Ride	Otis Turner	Bison
	Siege of Petersburg, The	Kenean Buell	Kalem
	Soldier Brothers of Susanna, The	Kenean Buell	Kalem
	Soldier's Duty		Edison
	Spartan Mother, A		Kalem
	Stolen Glory	Mack Sennet	Keystone
	Sundered Ties	Francis Ford	Broncho
	Sunset Gun, The	Bannister Merwin	Edison
	Tide of Battle, The	Kenean Buell	Kalem
	Two Spies, The		Kalem
	Under a Flag of Truce	Kenean Buell	Kalem
	United We Stand		Nestor
	War's Havoc	Kenean Buell	Kalem
	Wartime Romance, A	Richard Garrick	Selig
	When Lee Surrenders	Thomas Ince	Kay-Bee
	When Lincoln Paid	Francis Ford	Kay-Bee
1913	At Shiloh		Bison
	Banty Tim		Lubin
	Battle of Bloody Ford	K. Buel/ G. Melford	Kalem
	Battle of Bull Run, The	Hugh Ford	Bison
	Battle of Gettysburg, The	Thomas Ince	Broncho
	Battle of Shiloh, The	Joseph Smiley	Lubin
	Battle of Who Run	Mack Sennett	Keystone
	Belle Boyd, A Confederate Spy	Oscar Eagle	Selig
	Between Home and Country		Reliance
	Black Conspiracy, A	Walter Edwards	Kay-Bee
	Blue or the Gray, The	D. W Griffith	Biograph
	Boomerang The	Thomas Ince	Broncho
	Bread Cast upon the Waters	Thomas Ince	Broncho

1913	Call to Arms, The	Allan Dwan	Universal
	Carpenter, The or The stranger in Gray		Vitagraph
	Child of War, A	Thomas Ince	Broncho
	Cohen Saves the Flag	Mack Sennet	Keystone
	Colonel's Oath, The		Reliance
	Coward's Atonement, The	Hugh Ford	Bison
	Crimson Stain, The	Jay Hunt	Kay-Bee
	Daughter of the Confederacy, A	Hardee Kirkland	Selig
	Daughter of the Confederacy, A	Sidney Olcott	Warner
	Defender of the Name, The		Rex
	Devotion	Jay Hunt	Domino
	Dixie Mother, A	Jay Hunt	Vitagraph
	Dixieland	Hardee Kirkland	Selig
	Drummer of the 8th, The	Hunt / Ince	Broncho
	Favourite Son, The	Hugh Ford	Kay-Bee
	Fighting Chaplain, The	George Melford	Kalem
	Fire-Fighting Zouaves, The	Kenean Buel	Kalem
	For the Cause	Francis Ford	Biograph
	Girl of the Sunny South, The	Travers Vale	American K. C.
	Girl Spy's Atonement, The		Reliance
	Grand-Dad	Thomas Ince	Broncho
	Gray Sentinel, The	Burton King	Broncho
	Great Sacrifice, The	Raymond West	Kay-Bee
	Grim Toll of War, The	George Melford	Kalem
	Guerrilla Menace, The		Bison
	Heart Throbs	Burton King	Broncho
	Heritage of Eve, The	Jay Hunt	Broncho
	His Greatest Victory	George Lessey	Edison
	The Honour of a Soldier		Edison
	House Divided, A		Broncho
	Indian Summer	Lem Parker	Selig
	In Love and War	A. Dwan/ T. Ince	Bison
	In the Battle's Smoke		Pilot
	In the Days of the War		Pathe
	In the Secret Service	Henry MacRae	Bison
	Ironmaster, The	Reginald Barker	Kay-Bee
	John Burn's of Gettysburg	Kenean Buel	Kalem
	Light in the Window, The	Francis Ford	Bison
	Little Turncoat, The	Thomas Ince	Kay-Bee
	Lost Dispatch, The		Kay-Bee
	Love of '64, A		Lubin
	Madcap, The		Broncho
	Man Who Knew Lincoln, The		Reliance
	My Lady's Boot		Majestic
	Northern Spy, The		Bison
	Old Mammy's Secret Code		Broncho
	Only Veteran in Town, The	Charles Kent	Vitagraph
	Orphan of the War, An		Kay-Bee
	Patchwork Quilt, The		Edison
	Pauline Cushman, the Federal Spy	Oscar Eagle	Selig
	Picket Guard, The	Allan Dwan	Universal
	Powder Flash of Death, The	Allan Dwan	Universal
	Price of Victory, The		Lubin
	Pride of the South, The	Burton King	Broncho
	Prisoners of War		Kalem
	Reward of Service		Lubin
	Rosary, The	Smalley/Weber	Rex
	Rose of Sharon, The		Essanay
	Saved by the Enemy		Edison
	Sharpshooter, The	Charles Giblyn	Broncho
	Shenandoah	Kenean Buel	Kalem

1914		Silent Heroes	Thomas Ince	Broncho
		Sinews of War, The	Thomas Ince	Broncho
		Slave's Devotion, A		Broncho
		Soldiers Three		Bison
		Song Bird of the North, The	Ralph Ince	Vitagraph
		Soul of the South	Reginald Barker	Kay-Bee
		Southern Cinderella, A	Burton King	Broncho
		Through Barriers of Fire		Bison
		Toll of War ( or ? Grim.....)	Francis Ford	Bison
		True Believer, A	Burton King	Kay-Bee
		Under Fire		Bison
		United at Gettysburg	Frank Smith	
		Veteran, The	Jay Hunt	Broncho
		Volunteer Organist, The		Crescent
		War Francis Ford		
		War Correspondent, The	Walter Edwards	Kalem
		War Time Mother's Sacrifice, A	Burton King	Broncho
		When Life Fades	Francis Ford	Broncho
		When Lincoln Paid	Francis Ford	Kay-Bee
		When Lincoln was President		Pilot
		When Sherman Marched to the Sea	Jack Conway	Bison
		With Lee in Virginia	William Baumann	Kay-Bee
		Within the Enemy's Lines		Edison
		Woe of Battle, The		Kalem
		Women and War Allan Dwan		Bison
		Baby Spy, The	Edward Le Saint	Selig
		Battle of Gettysburg, The		Exclusive
		Between Two Fires		Lubin
		C. D.		Selig
		Chest of Fortune, The	Kenean Buel	Kalem
		County Chairman, The	William Porter	Famous Players
		Dan	Orving/Pratt	All Stars Feature
		Deadly Battle at Hicksville, The	Marshall Neilan	Kalem
		Fair Rebel, A	Frank Powell	Klaw and Erlanger
		Fitzhugh's Ride	John Ince	Lubin
		In Old Virginia		Lubin
		His Brother Bill		Lubin
		In the Fall of '64	Francis Ford	Universal
		Last Man's Club, The		Selig
		Lincoln's Thanksgiving Story	Benjamin Chapin	Chapin
		Little Rebel, The	Harry Solter	Warner's Features
		Littlest Rebel, The	Edgar Lewis	Photoplay Prod.
		Military Judas, A		Broncho
		Mother of Men, A		Warner
1915	#	Old Oak's Secret, The		
		Quantrell's Son	Robert Thornby	Vitagraph
		Question of Courage, A		Majestic
		Sleeping Sentinel, The		Lubin
		Soldier of the CSA, A		Selig
		Soldier of the USA, A		Selig
		Soul of Honor, The	James Kirkwood	Majestic
		Southerners, The	Benjamin Ridgely	Edison
		Stonewall Jackson's Way	Edgar Jones	Lubin
		Tavern of Tragedy, The	Donald Crisp	Majestic
		Wartime Reformation, A	Hugh Ford	Gold Seal
		Weaker Brother, The	Allan Dwan	Lubin
		And They Called Him Hero	Francis Ford	Bison
		Barbara Frietchie	Herbert Blache	Metro
		Battle Cry of Peace, The	Blackton/North	
		Betty's Dream Hero	Robert Leonard	Laemmle



1915	Birth of a Nation, The	D. W. Griffith	Epoch
	Colonel Carter of Cartersville	Howell Hansell	Burr McIntosh
	Coward, The	Barker / Ince	Kay-Bee
	Heart of Lincoln, The	Hugh Ford	Gold Seal
	Heart of Maryland, The	Herbert Brenon	Tiffany-Metro
	Life of Abraham Lincoln, The	Langdon West	Edison
	Life of Sam Davis:A Confederate		
	Hero of the Sixties, The		
	Magistrates Story, The	Langdon West	Edison
	May Blossom	Allan Dwan	Paramount
	Memory Tree, The		Universal
	President's Answer, The	Benjamin Chapin	Chapin
#	Railroad Raiders of ' 62, The	J. P. McGowan	Kalem
	Rivals		Kalem
	Sally Castleton, Southerner	Langdon West	Edison
	Sam Davis, the Hero of Tennessee		Connor
	Shattered Memories	Robert Leonard	Gold Seal
#	Soul of the South, The		Kay-Bee
	Spy's Sister, The		Lubin
	Stepping Westward		Ideal
	Their One Love	Jack Harvey	Thanhouser
	Tide of Fortune, The	Jay Hunt	Kay-Bee
	Tiny Hands	Sydney Ayres	Powers
	Under Southern Skies	Lucius Henderson	Universal
	Vain Justice		Essanay
	War Baby, A	Barry O'Neil	Lubin
	Warrens of Virginia, The	Cecil B. DeMille	Lasky
1916	According to the Code	E. H. Calvert	Essanay
	After the Battle		Universal
	Ashes of Rememberance	Allen Holubar	Rex
	Corporal Billy's Comeback	Goerge Cochrane	Big U
	Crisis, The	Colin Campbell	Selig
	Daughter of Dixie, A		Big U
*	Fair Rebel, A	David Miles	Biograph
	Gentle Volunteer, A	Ben Wilson	Rex
	Her Father's Son	William Taylor	Paramount
*	His Trust	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
*	His Trust Fulfilled	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
	Mammy's Rose	James Douglass	American
	Money to Burn		Essanay
	Naked Hearts	Rupert Julian	Bluebird
	Reunion, The	William Parke	Thanhouser
	Rose of the South, A	Paul Scardon	Blue Ribbon
	Son of a Rebel Chief, The	William Mong	Bison
*	Stepping Forward		Ideal
	Sting of Victory, The	Charles Haydon	Essanay
	Suppressed Order, The	Thomas Ricketts	Mutual
*	Swords and Hearts	D. W. Griffith	Biograph
1917	Battle Hymn of the Republic, The	Lawrence Trimble	Vitagraph
	Battle of Gettysburg	C Giblyn/ T Ince	Hiller and Wilk
	Call to Arms, The	Benjamin Chapin	Chapin
	Daughter of the Southland, A		Selig
	Field of Honour, The	Allen Holubar	Butterfly.
	His Mother's Boy	Schertzinger	Universal
	Jim Bludso	Browning/Lucas	
	Lincoln Cycle, The	Benjamin Chapin	Chapin
	Little Rebel's Sacrifice, The	Francis Ford	Big U
	Little Strategist, The	Stuart Blackton	Vitagraph
	Little Women	Alexander Butler	
	Little Yank, The	George Siegmann	Fine Arts
	My Fighting Gentleman	Edward Sloman	Mutual

1917	President's Answer, The Seventy and Seven Smashing Stroke, The Spreading Dawn, The Terrors of War, The Those Without Sin True to their Colors Two Kentucky Boys Your Obedient Servant	Benjamin Chapin  Lawrence Trimble Francis Ford Marshall Neilan G Cunard/F Ford Floyd France Edward Griffith	Chapin Vitagraph Universal Goldwyn Big U Famous Players Big U Edison Forum Films
1918	Hearts of Love Last Rebel, The Little Women Madam Who? Morgan's Raiders Son of Democracy, The Under the Stars	Charles Haydon Hamilton Harley Knoles Reginald Barker Lucas/Meredith Benjamin Chapin Benjamin Chapin	American F F C Triangle  Paralta Bluebird Chapin Chapin
1919	Copperhead, The Hay Foot, Straw Foot Little Women Secret Service Salome Versus Shenandoah	Charles Maigne Jerome Storm Knoles Hugh Ford Grey/Hunt/Kenton	Famous Paramount Famous Players Paramount Paramount
1920	Held by the Enemy Kentucky Colonel, The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, The	Donald Crisp William Seiter Wallace Worsley	Famous Players Hodkinson Goldwyn
1921	* Birth of a Nation, The Heart of Maryland, The Highest Law, The Jesse James under the Black Flag Johnny Ring and the Captain's Sword	D. W.Griffith Tom Terriss Ralph Ince Franklin Coates Norman Stevens	Epoch. Vitagraph Selznick Pictures Mesco Temple
1922	* Birth of a Nation, the Grandma's Boy * Heart of Lincoln, The	D. W. Griffith Fred Newmayer Francis Ford	Epoch Associated Gold Seal
1924	# Barbara Frietchie Dramatic Life of Abraham Lincoln, The Heart of Abraham Lincoln, The Old Fool, The Warrens of Virginia, The	Hillyer / Ince Phil Rosen  E. D. Venturini Elmer Clifton William Crinley	Metro Pictures A1 National Pictures  W. W. Hodkinson Fox Mustang
1925	Boundary Line, The Pony Express, The	James Cruze	Paramount
1926	Hands Up General, The Roughshod Fighter, The	Clarence Badger Keaton/Bruckman	Paramount Schenck
1927	Heart of Lincoln, The # Heart of Maryland, The	 Lloyd Bacon	Pathe Warner Brothers
1928	Court-Martial Heart of General Robert E Lee, The # Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, The	George Seitz Neill Alfred Santell	Columbia M G M First National
1929	California Mail, The Marching On Morgan's Last Raid Two Americans	Albert Rogell Marcel Silver Nick Grinde John Meehan	Fox MGM Paramount
1930	Abraham Lincoln * Birth of a Nation, The (revised + sound) Only the Brave	D. W. Griffith D. W. Griffith Frank Tuttle	United Artists Epoch Paramount
1931	# Secret Service	Walter Ruben	RKO
1932	Rebel Yell	Hatfield Parry	
1933	Little Women	George Cukor	RKO
1934	Are We Civilised Carolina Hoosier Schoolmaster, The	Edwin Carewe Henry King Lewis Collins	Raspin Productions Fox Monogram

1934		Judge Priest	John Ford	Fox
		Operator 13	Richard Boleslawski	MGM
		World Moves On, The	John Ford	Fox
1935		Little Colonel, The	David Butler	Fox
		Littlest Rebel, The	David Butler	20th Century Fox
		Perfect Tribute, The	Edward Sloman	MGM
		So Red the Rose	King Vidor	Paramount
		Uncivil Warriors	Del Lord	Columbia
1936		Cavalry	Robert Bradbury	Republic
		General Spanky	Newmayer/Douglas	MGM
		Hearts in Bondage	Lew Ayres	Republic
		Lonely Trail, The	Joseph Kane	Republic
		On Secret Service	Noel Smith	Warner Brothers
		Prisoner of Shark Island, The	John Ford	20th Century Fox
		Rainbow on the River	Kurt Neumann	RKO
1937		Glory Trail, The	Lynn Shores	Crescent
		Under Southern Stars	Nick Grinde	Warner Brothers
		Wells Fargo	Frank Lloyd	Paramount
		Western Gold	Howard Bretherton	20th Century Fox
1938		Frontier Scout	Sam Newfield	Fine Arts
		Of Human Hearts	Clarence Brown	MGM
		Strange Glory	Jacques Tourneur	MGM
		Texans, The	James Hogan	Paramount
1939		Frontier Pony Express	Joseph Kane	Republic
		Gone with the Wind	Victor Fleming	MGM
		Lincoln in the White House	William McGann	Warner Brothers
		Mooching through Georgia	Jules White	Columbia
		Old Maid, The	Edmond Goulding	1st National.
1940		Colorado	Joseph Kane	Republic
		Dark Command	Raoul Walsh	Republic
	*	Gone with the Wind	Victor Fleming	MGM.
		Man from Dakota, The	Leslie Fenton	MGM
		Santa Fe Trail	Michael Curtiz	Warner Brothers
		Virginia City	Michael Curtiz	Warner Brothers
		Young Bill Hickok	Joseph Kane	Republic
1941		Belle Starr	Irving Cummings	20th Century Fox
		Robin Hood of the Pecos	Joseph Kane	Republic
		Texas	George Marshall	Columbia
		They Died with their Boots On	Raoul Walsh	Warner Brothers
		Western Union	Fritz Lang	20th Century Fox
1942	*	Gone with the Wind	Victor Fleming	MGM
1943		Ox-Bow Incident, The	William Wellman	20th Century Fox
		Tennessee Johnson	William Dieterle	MGM
1944		Raiders of Ghost City	Ray Taylor	Universal

\* re-release    # remake

CIVIL WAR FILM EXHIBITION 1946-75

Year	Film	Director	Company
1946	Uncivil Warbirds	Jules White	Columbia
1947	Fabulous Texan, The	Edward Ludwig	Republic
	Romance of Rosy Ridge, The	Roy Rowland	MGM
1948	Another Part of the Forest	Michael Gordon	Universal
	Man from Colorado, The	Henry Levin	Columbia
	Red River	Howard Hawks	Monterey Prod.
	Silver River	Raoul Walsh	Warner Brothers
	South of St. Louis	Ray Enright	Warner Brothers
	Southern Yankee, A	Edward Sedgewick	MGM
	Tap Roots	George Marshall	Universal
1949	Little Women	Mervyn LeRoy	MGM
1950	Copper Canyon	John Farrow	Paramount
	Dallas	Stuart Heisler	Warner Brothers
	Great Missouri Raid, The	Gordon Douglas	Paramount
	Kansas Raiders	Ray Enright	Universal
	Outriders, The	Roy Rowland	MGM
	Redhead and the Cowboy, The	Leslie Fenton	Paramount
	Rocky Mountain	William Keighley	Warner Brothers
	Stars in my Crown	Jacques Tourneur	MGM
	Two Flags West	Robert Wise	20th Century Fox
	Winchester '73	Anthony Mann	Universal
1951	Drums in the Deep South	William Menzies	RKO
	Last Outpost, The	Lewis Foster	Paramount
	Red Badge of Courage, The	John Huston	MGM
	Red Mountain	William Dieterle	Paramount
	Santa Fe	Irving Pichel	Columbia
	Silver Canyon	John English	Columbia
1952	Bushwhackers, The	Rodney Amateau	
	Column South	Frederick De Cordova	Universal
	Hangman's Knot	Roy Huggins	Columbia
	# Hellgate	Charles Warren	Commander
	Horizons West	Budd Boetticher	Universal
	Springfield Rifle	Andre de Toth	Warner Broth
1953	Border River	George Sherman	Universal
	Escape from Fort Bravo	John Sturges	MGM
	Great Sioux Uprising, The	Lloyd Bacon	Universal
	Gun Fury	Raoul Walsh	Columbia
	Kansas Pacific	Ray Nazarro	Allied Artists
	Rebel City	Thomas Carr	Allied Artists
	San Antone	Joseph Kane	Republic
	# Sun Shines Bright, The	John Ford	Republic
	Thunder Over the Plains	Andre de Toth	Warner Brothers
	Vanquished, The	Edward Ludwig	Paramount
	Woman They Almost Lynched, The	Allan Dwan	Republic
1954	Black Dakotas, The	Ray Nazarro	Columbia
	Raid, The	Hugo Fregonese	20th Century Fox
	Siege at Red River, The	Rudolph Mate	20th Century F
	Time out of War, A	Denis Sanders	Sanders Brothers
1955	Apache Ambush	Fred Sears	Columbia
	Count Three and Pray	George Sherman	Columbia
	Five Guns West	Roger Corman	Palo Alto
	Seven Angry Men	Charles Warren	Allied Artists
	Yellowneck	John Hugh	Republic
1956	Friendly Persuasion	William Wyler	Allied Artists
	Great Day in the Morning	Jacques Tourneur	RKO
	Great Locomotive Chase, The	Francis Lyon	Disney
	Love Me Tender	Robert Webb	20th Century Fox
	Rebel in Town	Alfred Werker	United Artists
	Revolt at Fort Laramie	Lesley Selander	Bel Air

	Searchers, The	John Ford	Warner Brothers
	Showdown at Abilene	Charles Haas	Universal
	Three Violent People	Rudolph Mate	Paramount
1957	Band of Angels	Raoul Walsh	Warner Brothers
	Drango	Hall Bartlett	United Artists
	Guns of Fort Petticoat, The	George Marshall	Columbia
	Raintree County	Edward Dmytryk	MGM
	Ride a Violent Mile	Charles Warren	20th Century Fox
	Run of the Arrow	Samuel Fuller	RKO
	True Story of Jesse James, The	Nicholas Ray	20th Century Fox
1958	Proud Rebel, The	Michael Curtiz	MGM
	Quantrill's Raiders	Edward Bernds	Allied Artists
1959	Horse Soldiers, The	John Ford	United Artists
	Legend of Tom Dooley, The	Ted Post	Columbia
	Westbound	Budd Boetticher	Warner Brothers
1960	Thirteen Fighting Men	Harry Gerstad	API
1961	Deadly Companions, The	Sam Peckinpah	Warner/Pathe
	# Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, The	Andrew McLagen	20th Century Fox
1962	How the West was Won (CW episode)	John Ford	MGM
	Wild Westerners, The	Oscar Rudolph	Columbia
1963	Advance to the Rear	George Marshall	MGM
1964	Invitation to a Gunfighter	Richard Wilson	United Artists
	Major Dundee	Sam Peckinpah	Columbia
	Rio Conchos	Gordon Douglas	20th Century Fox
	2000 Maniacs	Gordon Lewis	Friedman/Lewis
	Vengeance	Dene Hilyard	Crown Intern.
1965	Arizona Raiders	William Witney	Columbia
	Finger on the Trigger	Sidney Pink	Comet/ AAPC
	Fool Killer, The	Servando Gonzalez	Allied Artists
	Incident at Phantom Hill	Earl Bellamy	Universal
	Shenandoah	Andrew McLagen	Universal
1966	Alvarez Kelly	Edward Dmytryk	Columbia
	Mosby's Marauders	Michael O'Herlihy	Disney
1967	Custer of the West	Robert Siodmak	Cinerama
	Fastest Guitar Alive, The	Michael Moore	MGM
	* Gone with the Wind	Victor Fleming	MGM
	# Gunfight in Abilene	William Hale	Universal
	Time for Killing, A	Phil Karlson	Columbia
1968	Arizona Bushwackers	Lesley Selander	Paramount
	Journey to Shiloh	William Hale	Universal
	No more Excuses	Robert Downey Snr.	Phantasma
1969	Cain's Cut Throats	Ken Osborne	J C Productions
	Desperados, The	Henry Levin	Columbia
	Scavengers, The	Lee Frost	Republic
	Undefeated, The	Andrew McClaglen	20th Century Fox
1970	Beguiled, The	Don Siegal	Universal
	McMasters, The	Alf Kjellin	Jayjen
	Rio Lobo	Howard Hawks	Malabar Prod.
1971	Buck and the Preacher	Sidney Poitier	Columbia
	* Gone with the Wind	Victor Fleming	MGM
	No Drums No Bugles	Clyde Ware	Jud-Len Prod.
	* Grabbers, The	Lee Frost	Republic
1972	Bad Company	Robert Benton	Paramount
	Bloody Trail	Robinson	Paragon

\* re-release # remake



Appendix 7

CIVIL WAR FILM EXHIBITION 1976-1999

Year		Film	Director	Company
1976		Outlaw Josey Wales, The	Clint Eastwood	Warner
1977		Shadow of Chikara, The	Earl Smith	AVCO Embassy
1985	*	Rebel Vixens	Lee Frost	Republic
1986		Rebel Love	Milton Bagby	Raven-Cliff Prod.
		Supernaturals, The	Armand Mastroianni	
1987	*	Gone with the Wind	Victor Fleming	MGM
1989		Glory	Edward Zwick	Tri-Star
1990		Dances with Wolves	Kevin Costner	Guild/Tlg Prod.
1993		Gettysburg	Ronald Maxwell	Turner Pictures
		Killing Box, The	George Hickenlooper	Motion Picture Corp.
		Sommersby	Jon Amiel	Warner
1995		Pharoah's Army	Robby Henson	CFP
1999		Ride with the Devil	Ang Lee	Enter.FD/Univ.

\* re-release    # remake

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